

# THE LONDON READER

of Literature, Science, Art, and General Information.

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No. 1219.—VOL. XLVII.]

FOR THE WEEK ENDING SEPTEMBER 11, 1886.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



["THERE'S NOT ANOTHER TRAIN OUT OF THIS STATION TO-NIGHT," THE OFFICIAL SAID, SUAVELY.]

## VERNON'S DESTINY.

### CHAPTER IV.

It was a fine morning after the rain, the winter's sun shone brightly into the pretty room allotted to Miss Charteris and the maid who had waited on her the night before, and stood ready with a pile of garments neatly brushed and dried, ready for their owner's wear.

Nell sat up in bed and rubbed her eyes, then gradually all the events of yesterday came back to her; but Lady Delaval's cruel story had no sting to wound her now, since such a gentlewoman as the mistress of Vernon Grange had told her to hold up her head and take courage.

She dressed quickly, and went downstairs a little shyly, wondering whether she should see her preserver of the night before, and in what words she ought to thank him.

There was no one in the dining-room when she entered it, the glass doors leading to the terrace were open. Nell passed through them,

and stood looking down upon the wide acres of the Vernons; then a man in a rough tweed suit came up the steps and took her hand.

"I can see you are no worse for the rain of yesterday. Did you sleep well?"

"Splendidly! and—"

He interrupted her.

"And have you banished your sorrows with the darkness?"

"How do you know I had sorrows?"

He smiled.

"You looked the picture of despair when I saw you standing in the lane. I thought, at first, you were some poor little child crying because she had lost her way."

"But I am not a child Sir Guy! I am six months older than Mrs. Merton."

"I doubt it."

"Isola was barely eighteen when she married, and I am turned nineteen."

"Miss Travers was nearer eight-and-twenty than eighteen when she committed perjury."

"Did what!"

"Committed perjury. It's the truest way of describing such marriages as hers."

"I think you are very hard on her."

"Pardon me, Miss Charteris, you are not a competent judge."

"Why not?"

"Because you are not likely to have heard the circumstances which have prejudiced me against Mrs. Merton."

"I think I have heard them."

"Then she is ten times worse than I thought her! Do you mean she actually dared to tell a child like you the story of the past?"

"She told me why you disliked her."

"Indeed! And you think me a bad judge? You will say next she was right to marry Major Merton, a man old enough to be her father!"

"I think she was quite right."

Sir Guy threw up his hands.

"I prophesied she would spoil you! I knew she was no more to be trusted with a young girl than a serpent would be; but I confess I did not think she would have achieved her work so rapidly. I congratulate you, Miss Charteris, on your aptitude for her lessons; truly you have proved an apt pupil."

Nell looked at him with a strange trembling of her upper lip, an ominous moisture on

her eye-lashes, which showed tears were not far off.

"Don't trouble yourself to cry," said Guy, sarcastically. "I am proof-hardened against tears. I know they are a terrible weapon against my sex, but I am too hard-hearted to be melted by them!"

"How dare you speak to me like that!" cried Nell, forgetting fear, shyness, and gratitude. "What have I ever done to you that you should taunt me so. I came downstairs this morning eager to thank you for your kindness yesterday. I wonder you took so much trouble about such a creature as you consider me!"

"I did not know then that you were Mrs. Merton's confidante and ally. Perhaps you are also honoured with the friendship of Captain Denzil."

"I never heard the name before. Stay, though. I think you mentioned it the afternoon when you came over to see Mrs. Merton."

"The fair Isola does not give you her whole confidence, I can see," said Guy, gravely. "I wonder if, in spite of your anger against me just now, you would let me give you some good advice."

"I don't want to trouble you," proudly. "It is no trouble. Will you listen?"

"Yes."

"However much you may like Mrs. Merton, however much you may agree with her, you are not bound to adopt all her likes and dislikes. I can see perfectly she has held me up to you as a monster for your exorcism. Well, no great harm can come of that, but she has one friend she will extol to you as perfection. Miss Charteris, the day she introduces you to Captain Denzil, beware!"

"But she never mentions his name. He has never been near the Park."

"He will be there soon enough. Isola Merton will not shut him out of her house if he is black-balled at every club in London. Sooner or later he will be received at the Park as Major Merton's guest, then remember my warning and—beware!"

"But why? What can Mrs. Merton's guests have to do with me?"

"If you espouse her dislikes, are you not likely to espouse her friend?" sternly. "I tell you, Miss Charteris, this man is not fit to speak to a girl like yourself. Mrs. Merton's own brother, Reginald Travers, has broken with him. I would rather see a sister of mine in her grave than know her intimate with Denzil."

There was just a spice of obstinacy about Helen Charteris.

"I can't dictate to Mrs. Merton what visitors she should receive. If Captain Denzil comes I can't insult him."

"But you can show him you know his character, and treat him in accordance. There, that is the gong. I will take you into breakfast, Miss Charteris, and trouble you no more. After all, I have no right to interfere with you."

Guy passed through the conservatory en route for the dining-room, and Nell exclaimed with admiration as she saw the lovely hot-house flowers. Guy paused before some delicate hyacinths, broke off a white one, and presented it to her.

Nell took it with trembling fingers. Her dream came back to her vividly as she received the fair waxen blossom. She thought of Lady Lil's prophecy that she ought to marry her preserver, and no other man.

Well, she had met him in waking life, and he had saved her from undoubted danger, but the romance Lil had conceived had no chance of being fulfilled.

Sir Guy thought her unworthy even of his friendship. As to giving her a more tender regard, there was no chance of it. It was not his to give, for had he not poured out the love of his life upon the woman he now hated with such bitter anguish.

Lady Decima received Nell with easy cordiality. No one would have guessed from her calm face of the desperate resolve she had

taken the night before. To all appearance she was kindness itself to Miss Charteris, only she said nothing of hoping to see her again, and when the carriage came round she contented herself with seeing Nell into it, instead of driving her to the Park as she had half intended.

"Mother, I think I shall go up to London," said Sir Guy, that same day; "and when I am there I may get a wandering fit on me, and go roaming off no one knows where!"

He had expected a flood of tears, and prayers that he would remain longer at the Grange; but Lady Decima agreed at once.

"I always think this place looks dreary in the winter, Guy. I never expected you to stay so long as you have. When the summer comes I shall look for another visit!"

"You don't mind?"

"Not I. My dear boy, I am getting used to a lonely life. Your visit has been very pleasant to me, but I never expected it to last!"

"And you won't get into mischief, old lady, and go running into intimacies with the fair lady of the Park so soon as my back is safely turned?"

"Certainly not. Indeed, I expect Mrs. Merton is too much offended at my coldness to care to resume the intimacy!"

"That is a pretty child!"

"Who?"

"Miss Charteris. Mother, if ever she gets into hot water at the Park—I mean if ever her eyes open to Mrs. Merton's true character, and she is unhappy—then you will try to help her, won't you?"

"I would do my best. But, Guy, you need have no fears. I think Miss Charteris will have another protector than Mrs. Merton before long. I know Mr. Travers admires her greatly. When I met Mrs. Merton last week, she told me it would be a match but for the girl's wealth and her brother's ultra sense of honour. Now, Guy, I don't want to say a word against the young man, but if he has to make a choice between a sheep-farm in Australia and a home here, with a pretty wife and five thousand a year, I don't think his ultra honour will hold out!"

"She might do worse! Rex has a good heart. He'll make ducks and drakes of the money; but, on the whole, he'll not be a bad husband!"

Mrs. Merton's reception of Nell was characteristic of herself.

"Well," she cried, carelessly, "and so you have really escaped alive? I half gave up all hopes of it!"

"What did you expect, Isola?"

"That my dove would be swallowed up by a certain eagle, or else taught that she was much too fair and spotless to consort with such a sinner as me!"

"Please don't talk like that!"

"I won't if it vexes you. Seriously, child, were they good to you?"

"Lady Decima was as kind as ever she could be. I think she is charming!"

"And Sir Guy?"

"I can't bear him!"

"Good child! Nell, did he try to make love to you. You may as well confess!"

"I should think he couldn't do such a thing!" said Nell, bluntly. "He bothered me most dreadfully. He is just as greivous as you said!"

Mrs. Merton looked well content.

"Ah! he doesn't come up to Rex in manners, in spite of all his wealth!"

"He is not near so amusing as Mr. Travers!"

"But he has ten thousand a year, a title, and one of the oldest estates in the county, while poor Reggy's possessions are nil, and his prospects represented by a sheep-farm in the bush, hundreds of miles away from even such society as Australia can boast!"

"He will make his fortune," said Nell, hopefully, "and come home here to settle down near you!"

Isola sighed.

"More likely he'll eat his heart out with

disappointment and home-sickness, and just come home to die; that's what I expect. Ah, Nell! you don't know Rex's misce by the want of money. If only Rex had just a little, he need not go to exile in Australia."

"I wish he had some of mine," said Nell, flushing with pity. "If only I were of age, Isola, I would send him some in a letter and get a stranger to direct the envelope, so that he never found out who sent it."

"You are a generous child; but even if you were of age, dear, you couldn't carry out that plan. Rex would never touch your money."

There was such a stress on the pronoun that Nell felt quite hurt. It seemed to imply that Mr. Travers might accept aid from any one sooner than herself.

"I don't see that," she said, in rather an injured tone. "If I have more money than I want, and he has not got enough, I think it would be quite right for him to take it. We are not like strangers. He told me only the other night he looked on me as his little friend!"

"Poor fellow!"

"Because he looks on me as a friend?"

"Because he had to hide his secret and crush his hopes. Nell, don't you know why Rex would never touch your money? Why, dearly as I love you, I am sorry at times you ever came to Merton Park."

"No, I don't," said Nell, flatly; "but one thing is soon mended—I can go away. I thought you liked having me, or I would never have come."

"I do like having you, and you shall never go away. Nell, don't you understand it is only that I am sorry for Rex?"

"I have not injured Mr. Travers."

"Not meaningly, dear; but, unconsciously, you have taught him to love you dearly, and the leaving you is another drop in his bitter cup. If only he were richer, or you had not been an heiress, you would have heard this before, Nell."

"I wish I hadn't heard it now."

"Why?"

"Because it makes me sorry. I liked Mr. Travers so much, and now what must he think of me?"

"That you are the one wife in all the world he would have chosen; but, Nell, you must not fret, it is only one of life's might-have-beens, you know. Rex will go to Australia in a week or two, and you will be presented at Court, and probably marry a nobleman before the season is over; it's the way of the world, you know."

She left the room, and Nell, burying her face in her hands, wept as though her heart would break.

She was a loyal, generous little thing, and it seemed to her she had all unconsciously done Mr. Travers a cruel injury. He had been so kind to her, and she had requited him like this.

Sir Guy Vernon would despise her if he knew it, and think she was indeed treading in Isola's footsteps.

She did not love Mr. Travers at heart. She thought not, but she liked him better than any one she knew. He had made time pass very pleasantly to her, and she would miss him sadly when he went away.

## CHAPTER V.

LYDIA CARTER thought Miss Charteris unusually preoccupied over her toilet that night. Nell would make no suggestions, give no vent of her wishes. So the white-brown housemaid had to use her own taste, and arrayed her mistress in floating robes of soft black tulle, fastened at the waist by an antique silver girdle.

It was a charming dress, and it suited Nell. There was no one in the drawing-room but Mr. Travers when she reached it. He put a low chair for her near the fire, and looked at her with unwonted tenderness in his dark eyes.

"You look tired still after yesterday's excitement. How did you come to lose your way?"



"I don't know!"

"The room seemed empty last night!" went on Rex, in his low wooing tone. "At least it was empty to me without my princess."

"Oh, do not call me that!"

"It is what you are to me! Nell, don't you know that if I ever had a home like this it is you I should ask to be its queen?"

Nell looked into the fire.

"When are you going to Australia?"

"Next week!"

"We shall miss you very much."

"Shall you?"

"Yes!" faintly.

"Ah! but it will only be from your angelic compassion, don't you know!"

"The moon looks  
On many brooks,  
The brook can see no moon but this."

He uttered the quotation in his deep, musical voice; and, tender as it was, there sounded something reproachful in its tone.

"You will come back?" said Nell, gently.

"I think not!"

"Oh, yes, to see Issa!"

"I don't think I could bear to come back to find you another's wife."

Nell blushed.

"I never mean to marry!" she returned, gravely. "Somehow I would rather not!"

"Why?"

Nell thought a moment.

"To marry one must be in love!" she replied, utterly unconscious that no such compulsion existed. "And I never mean to love anyone!"

The entrance of the Major, and some of the guests interrupted the *dehors-déte*. Nell was not sorry, but Mr. Travers looked decidedly sulky. Most of the visitors were to leave the Park on the following day, and the house-party would then be reduced to four—Mrs. Merton and her husband, Rex and Miss Charteris.

It would be a great change after the large number of guests who had been there for the Christmas season, but Isola declared herself looking forward to the quiet; and when they sat down to breakfast for the first time in their reduced numbers she was so bright and cheerful the Major seemed as if he could not take his eyes off her.

"A true sunbeam," he told Nell, when he got her alone for a few minutes. "I hope some day, my dear, you may be to your husband just what Issa is to me!"

Nell blushed, and wished people wouldn't busy themselves so much with her future. It was hard to have her marriage alluded to perpetually, as though it were an event as certain to happen as her funeral.

"I have a lovely idea for this afternoon," said Mrs. Merton, as they sat at lunch. "We will all go over to Raglan, and show Nell the ruins of the Castle!"

"It's too cold for ruins, Isola."

"Oh, no! It's a lovely day!"

"And it gets dark so soon!"

"I mean to go," said Mrs. Merton, determinedly. "You can stay at home, Jim, for once. Rex will surely be equal to the task of two ladies."

"You won't have above an hour there; those cross lines are so troublesome. Be a wise little woman, Issa, and give it up. Whoever heard of exploring ruins in the middle of January, and setting out on such an expedition at past two o'clock?"

"We can drive to Tintern, catch the three o'clock train for Monmouth, which meets one for Raglan. We shall have quite an hour for the ruins, and as you say it will be cold work we shouldn't care to be wandering about there much longer."

The Major never refused his wife anything on which she had set her heart, but he gave in on this occasion with a remarkably bad grace, and point-blank declined to accompany her on the expedition.

"I have to go into Chepstow on business, and I really think, Issa, as you won't be home till late, I'll take the opportunity to go over

to the Grange and see the Vernons. I was out when Sir Guy called here, and we have never met in all the time he has been at home. I owe him a 'thank you' at least for his care of Nell the other day!"

"What a splendid idea!" returned Isola. "You always think of nice things, Jim, and if Lady Decima presses you to stay to dinner don't refuse on my account. You know I don't want your friends to look on me as a little virago, who's never satisfied unless you're under her eyes. Jim, give my love to Lady Decima, and tell her I'll come with you next time."

I think, myself, Mrs. Merton must have conceived her brilliant plan some time before she proposed it, for the brougham came round with wonderful alacrity, while Isola and her brother were standing in the hall, and long before Nell had escaped from the hands of Lydia Cate.

"I don't like it," said Rex, in a sharply serious tone. "Isola, you know I leave everything to you, but I think this plan might have been avoided."

"Can you propose a better one?"

"I see no need for such desperate haste."

"Do you wish to draw back? Will you take the mending of your fortunes into your own hands? I assure you I am weary of plotting and scheming for you."

"I don't like the idea now it comes closer. She is such a child, poor little thing, and—"

"She will have one of the handsomest husbands in London; she will have the rank and status of a married woman."

"And spend her days with a man who has not one grain of love for her in his heart; who from first to last has wooed her fortune, and not herself."

"It is rather late in the day for you to turn disinterested, I think."

He sighed, half wearily.

"I suppose so. Whatever good there was in me died out long ago, and yet I can't think of blighting that child's life without a pang."

"Bah! It won't be blighted. She will make a very pretty woman, and have heaps of admirers; she'll be happy enough."

He gave her no answer, and she grew annoyed. Taking a letter from her pocket she showed him the envelope.

"Do you recognize that writing?"

"Certainly! It is your sister Irena's."

"Well, Irena is coming here on a visit. It seems that foolish old Major invited her as a 'pleasant surprise' to you and me. She arrives to-morrow."

"Good heavens!"

"So that whatever you mean to do must be done within the next twenty-four hours. Irena would be dead against us."

"Would she? I don't know much of her, but she struck me as rather a nice little thing."

It was a strange remark for a man to make of his own sister, but its strangeness never seemed to impress Mrs. Merton; she tossed her head scornfully.

"You seem to have acquired quite a taste for bread and butter misses," she said, spitefully.

"Helen Charteris and my sister Irena are good specimens of the genus. Dress them in white frocks and blue sashes, and send them out to a quiet tea-party, and they would continue to enjoy themselves very much. They haven't an idea what 'life' means; they are both good children, but a trifle heavy."

"And you think Irena would betray us?"

"I am certain of it. I would have telegraphed to stop her coming, but she would be certain to tell Jim."

"An informer, eh!"

"Not exactly; but she is such an old-fashioned child, she would be sure to think if I sent the telegram he knew all about it."

"I see."

"Well, you have to make up your mind, and promptly. Do you give up the game?"

"Too late."

"Not in the least. I can give up the trip to Raglan; you can have a summons to

London, and leave us before Irena comes; only, Rex, remember if you do leave me now it is for ever."

"And the alternative?"

"You know what we planned long ago—that we decided despatch and secrecy were our best weapons."

"I know."

"Well, I give you the opportunity; you must take advantage of it."

"I see."

"Now, which is it to be? Nell Charteris, or banishment for ever?"

"I am in your hands," he said, gravely. "This has been talked of for weeks, and yet, Issa, I feel a soundrel."

Nell came swiftly down the broad oaken staircase, wrapped in her warm furs. Rex never raised his eyes to meet her, he looked gloomy and preoccupied; Isola's face was wreathed in smiles.

"I thought you were never coming, Nell! We must drive fast, or we shall lose the train!"

But they did not lose it. A brief ride, and they were at Monmouth, where they had to change; but a very short delay occurred, ten minutes at the most, and the train for Raglan came up. Mrs. Merton clapped her hands in almost childish glee.

"We shall have a whole hour there after all!" she said, joyously. "and Nell will see the ruins with the sun setting on them. It is lovely then; they look almost as if they were on fire."

"I never saw any ruins in my life!" said Nell, catching her enthusiasm; "it will be quite a romantic expedition!"

They were at the station; the footpath across the fields led to the beautiful ruins; Nell was in front; Mrs. Merton had laid her hand on her brother's arm, and detained him at her side.

"Remember," said Isola, "if you fail to-day I can do no more for you. I have given you your chance; you must profit by it!"

They joined Nell, and walked blithely on, talking gaily as they went, though only one heart was light—that of the girl before whom there loomed an awful peril.

Mrs. Merton sat down on a bank in the grounds, while her brother and Miss Charteris explored the ruins.

From time to time they came back to her, and urged her to go with them to some point of interest. Generally she said she was too tired, sometimes she complied; and once, when they had ascended, as they thought, the highest point, it was Isola, who pointed out to them another turret above where they stood, reached by a half crazy path of woodwork.

"I could not mount it," she said, with a half shudder; "it is far beyond my climbing powers. I should turn giddy and fall down into the courtyard below; but you ought to take Nell there, Rex, it is the glory of the old ruin. You have a view over I don't know how many counties."

"Will you come, Miss Charteris?"

"Have we time?" asked Nell; "it must be getting late."

"Plenty of time," responded Rex, sagely; "and it can't take us five minutes. You are so swift in your movements, Miss Charteris, not like this lazy little Isola."

"You ought to be very grateful to me for telling you of the turret," she said, pettishly.

"Now I shall go back to my bank and rest there comfortably until you have seen all you care to. You can't say I have not been generous, and given you a fair chance."

She went down the steps, leaving them on their turret, with the higher one to tempt them onward. For a moment Rex stood perfectly still; the good and bad angels were having a sore battle in his heart.

Nell unconsciously decided herself, saying,—

"Let us go on. I want to see if I can make out Vernon Grange from the top of the tower!"

"It is not likely. The Grange is not a conspicuous building, in spite of the pride with which Sir Guy regards it."

The tone was so bitter, Miss Charteris looked up in amazement.

"Don't you like him?"

"I hate him!"

"Why?"

"Perhaps because he has a very tolerable amount of aversion to me."

"He hasn't!"

"He has! I am a man of many enemies, but I have not one more bitter than Sir Guy Vernon!"

"Why, he told me——"

She stopped abruptly. Rex misunderstood her.

"Oh, I daresay he abused me to you pretty roundly. I don't feel at all surprised."

"He did not! He said you were the best of your whole family, and that there was a great deal of good in you."

Rex sneered.

"Much obliged to him! Fortunately, I don't need to go to him for a character!"

"I can't make out why you and Isola hate him so."

"He hates us!"

"He hates Isola, but that is natural."

"Is it?"

"Because he loved her, and she wouldn't marry him. Of course it is very wrong to hate her just because she did not return his affection; but I can understand it."

"Can you? Would you hate anyone, Nell, just because they would not love you as you loved them?"

"I don't think so, but I am no judge. I don't think I know what love is!"

"I am sure you don't!"

Nell shivered. They had been ascending the rugged path all this time, and now they stood on the topmost turret of the ruins. Fair Monmouthshire and many another county lay sheltered beneath them, and the setting sun bathed all in a rosy light, and gave to the grand old ruins almost a fiery brilliance.

Nell shivered. She knew not why. She was little more than a child. A month before she had been a little simple schoolgirl—now her childhood seemed fleeting.

There was a look in Reginald's face she could not understand. It frightened her. She had never seen anything like it before. It was a dark evil triumph shining in his black eyes. Her own drooped beneath his gaze. She longed for the presence of another person. She could not bear to feel herself alone with him. She knew not what she feared, only she was in danger.

She knew it! She felt it! She longed for Lil—for some one of her girl friends; for the kind old Major, even for her ogre, Sir Guy Vernon. She did not wish for Isola. Mrs. Merton seemed to have no place in her memory. It was the sound of some voice she trusted the girl craved then.

"No," repeated Rex, in a voice of suppressed emotion, "you don't know what love is. Shall I tell you?"

"No," returned Nell, simply. "I would rather not hear. If love ever comes to me, I shall know without the telling. If not, I do not care to hear."

"But I care to tell you!" he went on, fiercely. "Love is the supreme passion of a man's life. It raises and ennoble him, or it makes of him—a demon!"

Nell trembled from head to foot.

"I am sure it is getting late," she said, uneasily. "Please, let us go back!"

He glanced at his watch.

"By all means. I think Isola said the train went at five-and-twenty past five. We shall have plenty of time. How you shiver, child? Are you cold?"

"I don't know! Yes," and she trembled.

"I think I must have taken a chill."

He drew her hand through his and descended with her. Very soon they were in the pathway leading to the station, walking at a quick pace.

"Isola must have grown tired of waiting, and walked on to the station," he said, when they found no one on the rustic bench where

they had expected to find Mrs. Merton. "It is of no consequence. We are sure to meet her there."

"It must have been very cold for her, sitting still so long."

"Yes; and she is a little lady not used to any discomfort. Merton spoils her so."

"He is very fond of her."

"Aye! Twenty past five," glancing at his watch. "We shall be there in good time, and have a few minutes to spare."

They stepped on to the platform as he spoke, but there was no trace of Mrs. Merton. Indeed, the whole scene presented a most desolate appearance. No human being was in sight, and though it wanted but two minutes to the starting of the train, the booking-office (a name far too grand for its rural substitute) was closely shut.

"I don't like this," said Rex, suddenly.

"Everything is as silent as death!"

"Where can Isola be?"

"She must be here somewhere. She is almost a stranger here, and she would not know any path but the one she came by. If you will take a seat here, I will cross the line and reconnoitre."

"But if the train comes?"

"It can't come, Miss Charteris, at present; there is no sign of porter, tickets, or passengers. I shall be back in two minutes!"

"Let me come with you," pleaded Nell.

"It may be very foolish, but I have got so frightened I can't bear the thought of staying here by myself!"

He smiled and took her hand. Together they went across to the other side, but they found no one about. Just the same deserted appearance, just the same lack of life.

"I don't like this!" repeated Mr. Travers again, with a strange expression of face, midway between admiration and dismay. "I am quite sure Isola told me the train started at five-and-twenty minutes past five. It is that now, and I see no signs of preparation for it!"

"Perhaps it has gone!"

Travers looked at her sharply.

"What then?"

"We should have to wait for the next," said Nell, with perfect composure.

Her ideas of the frequency of trains were founded on an intimate acquaintance with the Metropolitan Railway, by which she and her schoolfellows had often been conveyed to and from the South Kensington Museum.

She was willing to allow something for the remoteness of the village where she found herself. She expected she might have to wait half-an-hour instead of five minutes, but she never dreamed that any serious calamity would result from the misadventure.

"Of course it is tiresome," she said, cheerfully; "but Isola is quite sure to wait for us at Monmouth. When she finds we have missed the train she will keep the brougham till the next is in!"

Travers answered nothing. The child's innocence troubled him. He had told Isola that afternoon he felt like a scoundrel; the same sensation returned to him at Nell's words, and it was not a pleasant one.

Thump! thump! thump! with his stick on a wooden door, and at length it opened, to show the indignant face of a man, who might have been station-master, porter, or ticket-collector, or, perhaps, all three combined.

"I say! What's become of the five twenty-five train to Monmouth?"

"There ain't none!"

Nell gasped.

"The thing's this," said the man, when he understood their predicament, "the lady must have told you five-and-twenty minutes before five, and you thought she said after! I mind quite well a lady did go up by that train. She'd a velvet cloak on, trimmed with fur, and she seemed in a rare taking!"

"When's the next train?"

"Nine o'clock!"

"Nine o'clock! Why, we shan't get to Tintern much before midnight!"

"Nor then, sir!" said the official, suavely. "There's not another train out of this station to-night. I meant nine o'clock to-morrow morning!"

"I suppose we can hire a conveyance of some kind? It will be a tedious drive, but it is our only alternative!"

"You won't get any legs but yer own, sir, in Raglan, to-night. To-morrow's market-day at Monmouth, and everyone will want their beasts; not but what it would be too far to drive to Tintern—a sight too far!"

"But what are we to do?"

The man shrugged his shoulders and returned to the little den whence they had disturbed him. Evidently he thought their difficulty no affair of his.

(To be continued.)

## BOUND NOT TO MARRY.

### CHAPTER XXIII.—(Continued.)

At any other time she would have hesitated to answer his question. Now she has lost all fear of him. Her anxiety is to save him, spite of himself, and she tells him between her sobs how she had gone the previous night to Eleanor's house, and left a note warning her not to let Mr. Hughes leave without a companion that night.

"I knew that you were going to lie in wait for him," she added, brokenly, "and I felt sure that if you met it would be worse for both of you."

"Did you warn them against me?" he asked, in a low, threatening tone.

"I did not write your name, but they would know from whom danger was to be feared," she answered, sadly.

"And did you sign your own name?" was his next question.

She answered so calmly and hopelessly that he saw at once that it was useless to expend his fury upon her.

"No I did not sign my name, and I care fully disguised the handwriting, but what of that? The police will soon find me when they have taken you, and they will learn from the servants in your house that I was in your sitting-room last night when you returned."

His face became pale, and his dark eyes flashed angrily.

But this was no time for reproaches, and he was wise enough to know it.

The danger that threatened him had been created by himself, not by this girl, whose folly it had been to love him; and he felt very certain that if she were silenced, or her evidence rendered inadmissible, it would be next to impossible for the crime of which he did not repent to be brought home to him.

That Hugh Darrel was dead he did not doubt, and he would not wish it otherwise, but he would escape the consequences of having killed him if it were possible, and he firmly believed that by marrying Florry he would do this.

"You acted foolishly, and like a woman in sending a useless warning," he said, decisively; "but I do not doubt you thought it was best to do so. Now listen to me. I will leave England, and I will take you with me. We will be married first, and it will raise no suspicion that we go away from this land of fogs for our honeymoon. When we shall return, if we ever do so, lies in the future. Now, I have arranged everything; the licence is here, and we will be married to-morrow morning."

"Is this a time for marrying?" she asks, looking intently from his face to the paper, and back again to his face, and reading therein something that does not seem quite compatible with love.

"It is the best time," he says, emphatically, "the time when we have need of each other."



when union will make us both strong—and—  
—and safe."

He brings out the last three words at intervals, reluctantly, but carrying greater weight with them than if spoken more willingly; and Florry is impressed and silenced, and she feels herself powerless to offer any opposition, although she cannot overcome the horror that fills her soul at the idea of becoming the wife of a murderer!

She loves him—loves him better than her life, better than her hope of a future existence. She is ready to sacrifice her share in time and in eternity for his sake; and yet the thought that he has taken human life, and that his hand is red with the blood of a fellow-creature, thrills her with a nameless terror; and though she loves him so passionately she shrinks from his touch when he puts his hand upon hers.

If he were penitent for his crime, or if he showed some natural fear of consequences, then she would have more sympathy for him, and would likewise be less afraid to enter into the most solemn compact that can be made by man and woman.

But she was afraid, and she could not hide her fear.

The idea flashed across her mind that if he held human life so lightly, he might one day, in a fit of rage, or in a tempest of senseless jealousy, dispose of her as he had disposed of his rival; and she hung back now, when he expected her to fling herself into his arms, and vow that she would follow him to the end of the world.

Her reluctance piqued his vanity. It also alarmed him for his own safety, and he said impatiently,—

"I thought you desired to be my wife, and now, when I ask you, it is you that hesitate; but you must decide quickly. The moments to me are golden. I shall go away with you or without you; and if we do part now we do never meet again—never! You have the decision to yourself."

It is the turning point in her life, and Florence Trefusis feels it.

If they part now they part for ever, and she cannot part from him who is the lodestar of her life.

What she leaves is not much to regret, and what she goes to may be splendour and suffering, both in greater excess than falls to the lot of the majority of women; but so be it.

Let her suffer what she may, still will she be with the man she loves; and she would rather be his slave than be divided from him.

Coming to this conclusion, swiftly, like one who takes a leap in the dark, she rises to her feet, extends her arms, and says, with a voice made faint with emotion,—

"Take me with you, let it be where you will. I shall die if I am left behind."

There is a dark Oriental beauty in her face and figure, even in the lithe, supple movement of her body, and he clasps her in his arms, kisses her brow, and pressing her trembling form to his heart he says, tenderly,—

"I know you will be true to me, Florry; and now put on your hat and cloak. We have much to do if we will be married and leave England to-morrow."

She sighs; she would like to linger over the present, and to forget that in leaving her native land they will be flying from the arm of justice.

But time is passing. The Count knows that they have not a moment to lose, and very soon they are in a hansom cab, driving to the house of the rector of a London parish with whom Talmino is slightly acquainted, and with the clergyman matters are speedily arranged for the marriage to take place early the next morning.

The wily Italian is prepared with a very plausible tale as an excuse for this great haste.

He has an uncle lying at the point of death, and has been summoned to his side; but he wishes his fiancée to go with him, and thus the marriage must take place without delay.

This matter being settled, the couple drive to a jeweller's and buy a wedding-ring, and the Count presents his future bride with many costly presents suitable to the rank which she is so soon to assume.

From the jeweller's they go to an hotel and have luncheon, and when this is over they start off again; this time to purchase a portion of the bride's trousseau.

"You can buy dresses and bonnets in Paris," the Count suggests, "but you cannot wear anything you now have, and you can be married in your travelling-dress."

And they drove to Bond-street and spent a couple of hours in shopping, the majority of the things purchased being ordered to be sent to the Count's lodgings.

During the whole of this day both of them were careful not to open a newspaper, and they averted their eyes when they passed any place where boards on which were bills with the contents of the daily papers that would have stared them in the face.

"If I could only get away without knowing anything," was the thought in Florry's mind that prompted her to act like this. And the Count felt only too sure that his work was done, and Hugh Darrel was dead, to wish to satisfy himself on that point.

It was with great reluctance that he parted with Florry that night.

He might have been the most devoted lover, and she the most capricious of her sex, from the way in which he lingered—averse to go, yet knowing he could not remain, and that this parting would be their last. But he does go.

At eight o'clock on the following morning he is to come to take her to church, and when the ceremony is over, without delay they are to start for the Count's palace in Italy.

There is to be no secrecy, and the great haste is easily explained, for the sick uncle is not a myth, as Florry at first believed; and though it is doubtful if his nephew would have visited him so promptly had it not suited his convenience to do so, the most clever detective in the world could not prove this.

"It is those who hide who are suspected," was the Count di Talmino's theory; and he took very good care that there should seem to be no hiding in his case.

Sleep again refused to visit the Italian's eyes that night, and he felt as though the morning would never come.

He had planned everything so well, and he had met with so little difficulty, that he began to dread some great misfortune befalling him at just the last moment, when safety seemed certain.

But nothing did happen before the carriage, which he had ordered, came to take him to call for the bride in most unorthodox fashion; and he stepped into it, having previously sent his luggage to a railway station.

Now the moment had come he was so agitated that he could not pull on his gloves; and his face was as pale as that of a sick man, as he stepped from the brougham at Florry's door, and knocked for admittance.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### AN EVENTFUL BIRTHDAY.

It is the tenth of January, the day upon which Inez Woodfall comes of age, and the young lady herself is in a delightful condition of joyful anticipation and repressed excitement. For, on this day, it will be remembered, Inez had arranged with Charlie Rowe that he should come to Witherleigh, and claim her as his future wife.

Mrs. Darrel had been very strange of late. She might have been less arbitrary, but she was more reserved than of old; and Julia, who had become used to her moods, thought that she was expecting news that did not come.

Strangely enough, she seemed to have lost all interest in the family property, of which,

in the days when it was alienated, she talked so much, and she had declined her son's repeated invitation to visit Darrel Court while he was staying there.

But she had not heard from her son for more than a month; and then he had left Cornwall, and was staying in London, where his mother had meant to join him if he had answered a certain letter which she wrote. No answer had come, however, and it was now twelve days since she had written.

A woman less proud, and less tenacious of her own dignity, would have written again, or have telegraphed; but Mrs. Darrel could not bring herself to do either, and so she waited day after day, each day seeming longer than that preceding it, and still no letter came.

This anxiety concerning her son had made her rather forgetful of matters relating to her ward; and she was, therefore, surprised and annoyed when a couple of lawyers arrived at noon, having come for the purpose of acquainting Miss Woodfall with the details of the fortune of which she was to have the entire control.

It would not be true to say that Inez did not feel a little resentful at the manner in which Mrs. Darrel ignored this—her most important birthday; but Inez said nothing about it, and she saw by the start of surprise which her guardian gave when the lawyers appeared, that it had been a case of pure forgetfulness.

The legal business was soon transacted, and Inez received full power to draw at will, or dispose of, in any way she desired, the capital that, invested as it now was, brought in a clear five thousand a-year.

"From this hour you are your own mistress!" said Mr. Briggs, bowing gravely; and he folded up his papers as an intimation that the business which brought him there was at an end.

Inez smiled her acknowledgment of this remark, but Mrs. Darrel looked severe.

The suggestion that Inez was free implied that her own reign was over, and she had recently been smarting under the consciousness that even her son had ceased of late to acknowledge her authority. For such troubles as hers, however, there is little or no pity; and a deposed queen—whether she has been of one household, or queen of a nation—finds very few to sympathise with her grief over the loss of arbitrary power.

Luncheon, of which the two gentlemen partook, was rather a solemn and silent meal, and then the lawyers went away, their business being over; and Inez, snatching up a hat and cloak, ran out into the grounds, partly with the desire to calm her own mind, and to wonder if Charlie Rowe would really come, and partly to escape any discussion with Mrs. Darrel as to her future plans.

For it was impossible for her at the present moment to say what those plans would be.

If Charlie Rowe came and claimed the fulfilment of her promise, then her plans would principally be made by him; and if he did not come?

But she would not speculate upon this eventuality.

She had thought of him every waking moment since they parted, and had more than once regretted that she had not allowed him occasionally to write to her; but she had been so emphatic in her refusal that he had not sent her a line or a message, and she had looked forward to this day with so much eagerness, that now she felt downcast and disappointed that he did not come.

No time had been specified between them, and it was only now a little after three in the afternoon, but Inez could not rest quiet.

She went to the gates to look down the road, but she could not perceive any sign of him; and at length—sadly and slowly—she turned her steps in the direction of that part of the grounds in which she and Rowe were painting that afternoon when Mr. Makepeace joined them and precipitated the avowal of love,

which, but for his persistence, might never have been made.

She thinks of that afternoon as she walks along, and her face flushes crimson as she sees the tall, thoughtful-looking curate—in the distance, as yet—but coming towards her.

How shall she escape him is the thought which takes possession of her mind, and she is on the points of turning and hastening back to the house, when, glancing in the direction of the place towards which her steps had been bent, she sees the figure of a man standing on the self-same spot on which they parted, and without a moment's hesitation she walks quickly forward to meet him.

How her heart beats, and her eyes dance, as Charlie, unconscious of her proximity, passes to and fro like a sentinel on guard, with his head bent forward as though desirous to present as little of his face as possible to the cutting wind!

"What a silly boy to wait out in the cold like this, instead of coming boldly to the house!" thinks Inez.

But she does not slacken her pace, and soon she is at his side, standing in his way; and he, looking up, like a man suddenly awakened from sleep, utters an exclamation of delight, and clasps her in his arms.

Neither of them think of Mr. Makepeace at that moment, though both of them had previously observed him; and that gentleman, seeing how matters stood, changed his mind, and did not call at Witherleigh that afternoon.

"You have come at last, my darling!" says Rowe, holding her first at arm's length, and then kissing her passionately.

And from those few words she realises that she must have waited for her here a long, long time.

She chides him gently, and tells him she expected he would come to the house and ask for her, and she is rather surprised to find how diffident he is in wooing an heiress.

"You might have changed your mind," he said, in justification of his backwardness; "and you had every right to do so if you wished."

But she silences him by putting her hand over his lips, and he kisses it; or, rather, he kisses the glove that is upon it; and Inez, who feels that now she is of age she can and will do as she likes, suggests that it will be much more pleasant in the house than out here, exposed to the north-east wind, and the cold white flakes of snow that drive upon them.

"If I go with you to meet Mrs. Darrel it will be as well if you wear this," observed Rowe, producing a small case which Inez well knows can contain nothing but a ring.

Oddly enough, on this her twenty-first birthday, she had not received a single present. Mrs. Darrel had forgotten the day, and Hugh, who usually sent a birthday card, had on this occasion omitted to do so.

Thus the ring was doubly welcome, and Inez took off her glove that Charlie might place the jewel on her finger, and she kissed it after him before she replaced her glove on her hand, and then she linked her arm in his, and in this fashion they walked towards the house.

Mrs. Darrel, who was crossing the hall as they entered the house, stared at Rowe and looked beyond him, expecting to see her son. Not doing so, however, she barely returned his salutation, and then asked,—

"Where is Hugh? Why doesn't he come in also?"

"Darrel is not with me," replied Rowe, with some natural embarrassment. "He did not know of my intention to call here to-day. In fact, I have not seen him for some little time."

The mother's face changed, but natural affection quickly overcame her anger, and she asked anxiously,—

"Have you heard anything of my son lately? I have been expecting a letter from him for the last ten days, and I had meant to go to London, but am waiting until he writes."

Her anxiety is infectious; and Rowe, looking at her troubled face, remembers that Hugh Darrel has always spoken of his mother with respect and deference, and he believes he would be one of the last men in the world to leave an important letter of hers unanswered.

On his own part, he had, as he believed, kept purposely out of Darrel's way of late, and he now remembers that he and his old friend have not met since the day after Christmas.

"I have not seen him myself, but I know some of his friends who will have seen him lately," he says, with a view to soothe the anxious mother; and she, desirous to hear from her son, and yet at the same time to save her own dignity, says,—

"If you know where to make inquiries about him I wish you would telegraph, and let the answer be paid for. One of my servants shall take it to the nearest office and wait for the reply."

"Yes," assents Rowe, reluctantly.

He is rather afraid to meddle in this matter, for he knows that Hugh Darrel is keeping Eleanor Rosevear's name a secret from his mother, and he is too loyal to his friend to betray him.

Mrs. Darrel, however, is too anxious to hear from her son to let Rowe's scruples stand in the way, and she hastens to put pen and ink and a telegraphic form before him, and she leaves him to write the message, while she calls a servant to take it to the post-office.

Rowe sat down at the table, and puckered up his forehead as he meditated how he could frame the message so as to get the information he desired, and betray no one.

At length he thought of addressing the telegram to Mrs. Pritchard, giving his own name, and withholding that of Mrs. Darrel.

He wrote as follows:—

"Do you know anything of our friend Hughes? His people are anxious about him. Kindly telegraph reply."

When this was sent Mrs. Darrel told Inez to ring for tea, and she casually remarked,—

"I suppose you came here to-day to see my son?"

Inez glanced at him. A silent movement of her lips seemed to say "speak," and he answered quietly, but with all respect,—

"No, I did not expect to find Hugh here; I came to see Inez."

"Inez!" repeated Mrs. Darrel, assuming her most stately manner, and regarding him with distinct displeasure.

"Yes," he assented, leaving her to begin the attack.

"May I ask why you wished to see Miss Woodfall," she asks, irritated, and a trifle alarmed at his assurance.

"I came to ask her to marry me!" he replies, feeling rather nervous under the stern eyes fixed upon him.

Inez perceives this, and quickly comes to his rescue by saying,—

"And I have promised to do so, aunt, so pray congratulate us."

"I should like to know that there is some good ground for congratulation," replied Mrs. Darrel, severely. "I am in complete ignorance of Mr. Rowe's position or means."

"He has quite satisfied me on those points, aunt," returns Inez, resolutely; "indeed we settled everything when Mr. Rowe was here the last time, but as I was so nearly of age I asked him to wait until to-day, for by so doing we relieve you of any responsibility in the matter."

"In other words, you do not require my consent?" exclaims Mrs. Darrel, her eyes flashing, and her proud handsome face, pale with anger.

"The lawyer this morning told me that I am my own mistress," said Inez, smiling; "so I suppose I do not require the consent of anyone to my marriage, but I hope you will be good friends with us, aunt, and that you will not be angry at my not having asked your advice."

"Do you!" and Mrs. Darrel rose from her chair very slowly, and keeping her head high in the air, walked out of the room without another glance at the couple who had so deeply offended her.

"I suppose I had better go," observed the artist, rising, and looking ruefully at the closed door.

"No, don't go yet," pleaded Inez, placing her hand upon his shoulder, and looking into his face with loving eyes. "If aunt is going to be disagreeable I shall leave her and live somewhere else, though I don't quite know where."

"Suppose we find a house together?" he suggests, while he clasps her waist in his arm and kisses her tenderly.

She blushes and smiles, but she offers no objection. There is nothing, in her opinion, to be gained by waiting, and it seems but too certain that Mrs. Darrel will not make things too pleasant for her while she remains here.

"We want to live in London, don't we?" she asks, nestling up to his side, "and I don't see how I am to go there; until—" then she pauses, not quite liking to put her thoughts into words.

"Could you not pay a visit to my mother and sister?" he asks, thoughtfully; "they live close to London, and would be very much pleased to have you with them until we can get married and have a home of our own."

"I should very much like to go to them," assents Inez, "and then I should see you every day, shouldn't I?"

He laughs as he responds,—

"Yes, I hope we shall see each other constantly soon, but now I must go. I do not care to stay where the mistress of the house does not make me welcome. You shall hear from me daily, and my mother will send you an invitation as soon as I have seen her. The rest we can arrange afterwards. Good-bye, darling!"

They are still saying "good-bye" when a servant comes into the room with a telegram in his hand.

Charlie Rowe is annoyed at being "caught" kissing the heiress.

He is likewise angry with Mrs. Darrel, and as the telegram for which the servant had waited concerns her and not him, he says sharply,—

"Take it to your mistress; it is for her, not for me. I am going."

The man retired, and carried the message literally as it was given to him; and Rowe, cutting his leavetaking short, with a final embrace, left the house, accompanied to the front door by Inez.

He had not reached the end of the gravel walk, which terminated at the gate leading on to the road, when a servant came running after him with the exclamation,—

"Oh! please sir, my mistress's compliments, and will you speak to her before you go!"

Rowe hesitated.

He felt greatly annoyed at the manner in which Mrs. Darrel had treated the announcement of his engagement to Inez, and he was in no mood to obey that lady's beck and command.

"It's about the telegram, sir," said the man, seeing that Mr. Rowe was going to refuse.

Still the artist hesitated, and he might even then have refused to return if Inez had not appeared in the distance. Then he had no choice but to turn back and meet her.

"Mrs. Darrel has received some very dreadful news about Hugh," said Inez, hurriedly; "she is nearly distracted. She wants you to tell her what to do. Don't take any notice of her manner to us this afternoon; she never means half the disagreeable things she says."

"Then it is a pity she says them," returned Rowe, drily.

But he submitted to be led back again to the house, and taken into the presence of Mrs. Darrel, who was too much agitated to offer the ghost of an apology for her recent redness,



or even to show the least sign that she remembered it.

"Can you tell me what this means?" she asks, handing Rowe the opened telegram, her hand trembling as she does so.

Rowe takes the paper. The message in reply to his own was sent by Mrs. Pritchard, who was at the time evidently in great distress.

"Mr. Hugh Darrel is lying here dangerously wounded. He is still alive, but the doctors have twice despaired of his life. We have wondered that none of his family have come to him. If you know his mother pray bring her here without delay."

Charlie Rowe's face becomes grave as he reads this. He has a very sincere regard for Hugh Darrel, and though he has not cared quite so much for him since he succeeded to his inheritance, he is quite ready to hasten to his side now he is in danger.

"I don't understand it," he says looking at the paper blankly. "It seems strange for Mrs. Pritchard to say he is 'dangerously wounded.' But I will lose no time; I will go to him at once."

"I will go with you," says Mrs. Darrel resolutely, but Rowe objects to this arrangement, and he says promptly,—

"I can catch the next train to London if I go now and alone; you and Inez can follow by a later one. Every moment is precious, and I shall be able to make arrangements for your comfort."

Then, without waiting for protest, he went, leaving the distressed mother in a frame of mind bordering upon distraction.

His conduct to her seemed unfeeling, but from the wording of the telegram Charlie Rowe dreaded the worst, and he thought he might make the blow less heavy to her by going in advance.

## CHAPTER XXV.

### WAITING.

ELEANOR ROSEVEAR's mental sufferings, as she watched beside the couch of her lover, were much more intense than his physical agony, though they were not likely to prove so fatal.

Over and over again she reproached herself for what she now termed "her senseless conduct," in refusing to marry him, because he was the only man in whose favour old Miss Darrel had made an exception, when she virtually bound her not to marry.

But for that outburst of resentment on her part Hugh might have been alive and well, and now he lay helpless as an infant on the bed before her, his wound refusing to heal, his strength sapped from him by loss of blood, and his mind clouded with the fever that burnt and racked his frame.

She was not sure that he had ever quite recognised her since he had been brought here.

He talked about her at times, but his words were disjointed and often incoherent.

More frequently he seemed to be addressing his mother, often expostulating with her, and several times he mentioned the name of Inez—a name that from his lips was strange to Eleanor.

They had engaged a professional nurse, but Eleanor and Mrs. Pritchard arranged together that either of them would always be in the sick room, lest some sudden change for good or ill should take place in their absence.

They had ceased to talk together about the state of their patient, for Eleanor dreaded to put her thoughts into words, and Mrs. Pritchard had too much genuine sympathy for her, and felt too much genuine regard for Hugh, to care to talk about the darkness of death that seemed to be slowly coming upon him.

Not that they gave up hope, but there was a cold dread underlying their most sanguine anticipations, that hushed their voices and made them afraid to speak about what was ever present to their minds.

By tacit consent—for no word was breathed

on the subject after Hugh was brought back to the house—nothing was said to the police about the Count di Talmينو.

According to Mrs. Pritchard's opinion there was no legal evidence to connect the Count with the crime, and even to hint her suspicions would necessitate dragging Eleanor's name before the public in a manner which Hugh Darrel himself would resent, more than anyone else, if he lived to know it.

The punishment of the would-be murderer would not bring the victim back to health and strength, and though justice demanded a stern retribution, both Eleanor and Mrs. Pritchard felt that it was not by their hands that the blow should be struck.

They gave to the police the warning and anonymous note which Florry Trefusis had left at the house, and in which the wounded man was spoken of as "Mr. Hughes," and thus, when the police made inquiries and the newspapers devoted a small paragraph to the matter, our hero was described as an artist, and his identity with Mr. Hugh Darrel of Darrel Court was not suspected by those who read the case, and knew him under his real name.

The anonymous note was the subject of much speculation, and it underwent a very minute examination; but it had revealed all it was ever likely to reveal.

It had warned Hugh Darrel's friends that he was in danger, showing that the crime was premeditated, and it had sent them after him in time to find him alive, perhaps to save him.

But it left no trace of the writer, and the servant to whom it was given paid so little heed to the woman who left it, that when asked to describe her she found it impossible to do so.

A very careful examination of the spot upon which Hugh had been attacked, resulted in the discovery of a short dagger of Italian workmanship.

But there was neither coronet nor initials upon it, and there was nothing about the weapon to prove that it had not been purchased at a curiosity shop, and used by an American or Spaniard as readily as by an Italian.

When Mrs. Pritchard heard of this discovery her last doubt regarding the Count's guilt disappeared, and she began to fear that she was carrying her silence too far, and by so doing was aiding the guilty, and obstructing the course of justice.

In Hugh Darrel's critical condition, however, it was difficult to know what to do, for if he recovered, Talmينو's offence would be regarded by the law as a comparatively light one; while, if the victim died, it would be the gravest crime which could be perpetrated.

And Hugh Darrel's condition was as critical as it could be.

The best doctors in London were called to his aid, and admitted themselves powerless to save him.

But still he lived; and where there is life there is hope.

Ten days had passed, and Hugh still lay under the influence of the fever, unconscious of the loving eyes that kept such vigil by his side, and unable to observe the ravages that grief and fatigue, sleepless nights, and weary days had made upon Eleanor's beauty.

Lovely she still is, but the character of her loveliness has changed.

Naturally she is tall and largely made, with a skin that is smooth as ivory, but pale and delicate as the inner petals of a white rose. Her features are cast in a proud, firm, yet tender mould, the sensitive mouth and large, liquid brown eyes doing much to soften the haughty carriage of the head, the severely-straight nose, and the low, broad brow fringed with an abundance of dark golden hair.

Now the roundness of the cheek is gone the eyes look large and hollow, and the waving hair is brushed loosely back and twisted into a thick, massive knot at the back of her head. But it is the expression, rather than the outline, of her face that is so changed.

Looking at her, you would know that she had gone through great suffering, and that it had made her humble, patient, and resigned to the will of Him who giveth life and who taketh it away.

"As gold is cleansed by fire,  
So the heart is tried by pain."

Eleanor's heart was like pure gold; the dross had been taken from it in the fiery crucible of pain, and she appeared, even to those about her, a changed woman.

This afternoon she is sitting by Hugh's side, listening to his rambling, and wondering if it was not her duty to seek for his mother, and acquaint her with the condition of her son.

All the enmity in her heart towards Mrs. Darrel had died out.

For the sake of him whom they both loved she was ready to forgive and forget all the bitter speeches which had been repeated to her: nay, she was so far a conqueror over pride and self as to be ready to welcome the woman whom she had for years regarded as her enemy, and to share with her the loving duty of winning him back to life—or closing his eyes in death!

As thoughts like these were passing through her mind, Hugh, who had been silent for a few minutes, said, slowly and distinctly,—

"Mother! Nell!"

Then, though she answered him, and was close to him in a moment, he fell into a sleep, which, to her eyes—practised now in watching him—seemed more calm and peaceful than he had experienced since he had been under her care.

Remembering the instructions of the doctor, she sat down at a little distance from the bed and remained quiet, listening to his breathing.

This occupation became so monotonous after a time that her own eyelids were drooping, when the gentle opening of the door roused her, and she saw Mrs. Pritchard emerge from the screen that covered it.

She held up her hand as a warning that their patient was asleep, then noiselessly crossed the room to where her companion stood.

Without a word Mrs. Pritchard gave her the telegram from Charlie Rowe, and Eleanor read it, then asked, in a low tone, if the messenger was still waiting for the answer.

The reply was in the affirmative, and Eleanor said, without hesitation,—

"Tell Mr. Rowe how he is"—and she glanced in the direction of the bed—"and tell him to bring Hugh's mother without delay!"

Then she went back to her post, and thought, with a throbbing heart, that Hugh's position had reached a crisis, and that a change for better or worse was not far distant.

After a while, one of the two doctors who was attending him, having previously spoken to Mrs. Pritchard, came into the room noiselessly, and approached the bed.

He looked at his patient very closely, listened to his breathing, and then retreated, beckoning Eleanor to follow him.

She obeyed, though she went unwillingly, for she more than half anticipated what was going to be said to her.

"I shall stay here until he wakes," observed the doctor, gravely, and looking with anxiety at her pale though lovely face, "so you had better lie down in your own room and try and sleep for a while."

She shook her head. She might feel drowsy sitting in the hot, dimly-lighted room, listening for the breathing that every moment she feared would stop; but she could not lie down and sleep with the probability before her mind that when she awoke he might be gone.

"Gone!"

A shudder shook her frame, and she pressed her hands upon her heart suddenly, so sharp was the pain that pierced her.

The doctor observed the movement, and asked her some questions about her own health; but she answered evasively, and with repressed impatience.

It annoyed her to think about herself or about her own comfort, when he who was dearer to her than life lay there asleep, hanging, as it were, between time and eternity.

If he died, of what value would life be to her? and that he would live she knew there was but the faintest hope.

So, despite the doctor's advice to the contrary, she took up her old post in the sick room, Mrs. Pritchard this night bearing her company while the nurse slept.

They all seemed to feel that this night would decide whether or not there would be any more need for watching.

About nine o'clock in the evening a servant came to the door of the sick-room and beckoned to Mrs. Pritchard, whose quick ears had heard the roll of wheels outside the house, and the dull sound of the muffled knocker, and who guessed at once who had arrived.

She rose and quickly left the room, and outside the door the servant gave her Mr. Rowe's card.

"Where is he?" she asked, sleepily.

And the answer was, "In the drawing-room, ma'am."

Why the servants kept up a large fire in the largest and most handsomely-furnished room of the house was a question which only they could answer.

Perhaps they thought it was nearest to the sick-room, and being the best, would suit their mistress or any of her visitors; and in this they were right.

Here it was that Mrs. Pritchard found Charlie Rowe, who, on his arrival in London, had driven direct to Hampstead.

They shook hands almost in silence; then the artist asked,—

"What did you mean in saying that Hugh was wounded?"

"Have you not heard?" asked the lady, looking at him in surprise; "the affair was reported in most of the papers."

"I never read the 'horrors' in a newspaper," he answered, briefly.

And then she told him what had happened, suppressing only her own suspicions with regard to the Count di Talmino.

"You say that Darrel is in a critical condition?" he asked, looking at her earnestly.

She answered him with her eyes rather than in words; then she said, sadly,—

"He is asleep now. When he wakes—if he ever does wake—we shall know if there is any chance of his recovery."

"His mother is coming to-night," he says, sadly; "can she stay here?"

"Yes, of course; but perhaps it will be as well not to mention Miss Rosevear's name until afterwards."

She paused before uttering the word.

It was evident to her listener that she thought there could be but one conclusion to this sad chapter in their friend's history.

He bent his head; then he asked,—

"Can I see her or him?"

"One of the doctors is with him," she answered; "they are watching and waiting. I will let Miss Eleanor know that you are here."

Then she left him, and he, sad of heart, sat down to wait until Eleanor joined him.

She came so quickly that he gave a start of surprise as he saw her standing before him, and observed the change that had come over her.

He asked no questions.

Her face seemed to reveal to him whole volumes of love and suffering, and he clasped her white hand in sympathy; then he said,—

"Mrs. Darrel will be here in about a couple of hours. I have not told her your name, and I leave it to yourself to do so. She will bring a young lady with her of whom she has been the guardian, but I will take her to my mother's house."

"Is her name Inez?" asked Eleanor, with an effort.

"Yes; have you heard of her?" he returns, his face brightening.

"I have heard her name," she replies,

speaking with evident pain and difficulty. "Perhaps Hugh would like to see her if he wakes."

He understands her meaning, and hastens to say,—

"No, he won't care to see anyone but you and his mother. Inez and I are engaged to be married, and therefore my mother's house, under the circumstances, will be the best place for her. Can I be of any service whatever to you or to poor Darrel?"

She shakes her head, and tears fill her eyes, though they do not fall upon her cheeks.

"There is only One who can help us now," she says; and she bends her head in reverent humility.

"Then I will return to Victoria Station and meet Mrs. Darrel and Inez," he says, eager to be doing something. "Good-bye for the present."

And he presses her hand and leaves her, feeling with intuitive delicacy that words of hope will seem like empty words.

When he is gone Eleanor returns to the chamber of the wounded man, waiting there until the Angel of Death shall visit or shall pass over it.

(To be continued.)

## THE GARDENER'S DAUGHTER.

—o:—

### CHAPTER XXIV.

"THIS is really too provoking!" exclaimed Mrs. Seymour, looking up from a letter at breakfast the next morning. "Here is a note from Carrie Conway-Green, and she says they have the measles, and she is sending Tommy here to-day, as she is sure I don't mind, and she wants to get the dear child out of the way of infection."

"Tommy! Is that the little beast with red hair, and that wears a kilt?" inquired her cousin Max.

"Hush, Max! You must not call him a beast! He is your heir!" she replied, with a smile.

"I know he is my heir, but that does not prevent his being a most mischievous, obnoxious urchin! I hope you are not going to let him loose downstairs. Is there not some nursery or place where he could be stowed away; and can't you get him a kind of keeper?"

"You seem positively afraid of him, Captain Eliot," said the girl.

"Afraid! I should think so! You will be, too, when you know him. Nothing is sacred from him. I don't mind a fine, manly boy, with a spice of mischief."

"Such as you were yourself!" interrupted Mrs. Seymour.

"But this little beggar delights in listening to his elders' conversations, storing them up, and bringing out the most damaging disclosures before everyone, and naturally causing the most embarrassing situations. I've seen people look as if a bomb had exploded on the table after one of his 'stories!' I've known him make people enemies for life."

"He must be a sweet child!" remarked the girl who sat behind him.

"Yes, he does not do it ignorantly, but enjoys it most thoroughly, and sits grinning like a little fiend. He is disgustingly greedy and a hopeless liar, and, in short, as great a little cur as ever was born," rising from his seat as he concluded.

"Hullo, Eliot! You seem to have a strong feeling about this boy! The sooner you marry and do him out of his inheritance the better!"

"Oh! he won't come to Carnegort in my lifetime, and when I am dead, I won't care. *Après moi le déluge.* What I object to is his presence here. Ladies, I advise you not to sit next him. He wipes his hands on principle

on pretty frocks, and has a grand knack of upsetting tea or claret."

"It's not often Max says so much about any one," remarked his cousin, after he had left the room. "I suppose it's in human nature to hate one's next-of-kin; and, besides, Tommy is a horrible little boy, quite spoilt. His father and mother encourage to say rude, sharp things, and they think him quite clever and witty, whilst he is really a little savage."

"Can you not get rid of him any way and shelve him upstairs?" suggested one of the company.

"No. He must have the run of the house and be treated like a grown-up person, or his mother would be mortally offended, and I'm as much afraid of her as Max is."

"I should risk it," said Helen. "Send a telegram—'No room for Tommy.'"

At luncheon the redoubtable Tommy was present—a pale, pretty-faced boy, with red hair, a snub nose, and minus two front teeth. He was dressed in a grey tweed kilt, and was with difficulty prevailed upon to remove his hat, a battered straw sailor one, with a red ribbon.

To some of the company—mutual connections of Mrs. Seymour's—he was but too well known; others gazed at him curiously. So far as luncheon was concerned he belied his character, and confined himself to the business of eating and drinking. But at dinner he came out in his true colours. He sat opposite Mary, and when he had eaten to repletion he stared at her hard, stared at her intently for about minutes. At last he spoke in his high squeaky voice,—

"You are Miss Darvall, ain't you? You girl in white!" nodding at her.

"Yes," nodding in reply.

"You don't look a bit different to others!"

"Do I not? Why should I?" she inquired.

"'Cause," glaring at her, "you are only a common girl. 'Cause you were a 'servant!'" and he laughed boisterously.

Mary coloured, and turning to her neighbour, said,—

"He is beginning! I suppose that is bomb number one? What you say is quite true," she returned, looking at Tommy; "but people in the kitchen have some manners, and you have none—you rude little boy."

There was a flash in her eyes that cowed Master Tommy for some time, and he gave his attention to his plate. But during dessert, and during a dead silence, his chirruping treble was heard in reply to a young man, his neighbour, who was drawing him out, and who had been cruel enough to give him a glass of wine.

"Mother says that Sophy asked Miss Darvall here because she wants to marry her to Max, and mother said—"

"For goodness sake, hold your tongue, Tommy!" cried Mrs. Seymour in despair. "You shall not dine at table again, and if you say another word I shall send you to bed—now!"

Tommy made no reply beyond a hideous face, and presently avenged himself by upsetting and breaking a finger glass.

His last remark had, of course, been distinctly audible. Some people had giggled, some people had looked pale, for they knew not whose turn it might be next; and one or two got red—notably and naturally Miss Darvall. Strange to say, Captain Eliot was about the most unconcerned of the party.

After dinner Mary and Captain Durand, who, she discovered, by the way, was a great friend of Max Eliot's, strolled again up and down the terraces in the moonlight, and he said rather abruptly,—

"I did not know, Miss Darvall, that you and Eliot had met before?"

"Why! What do you mean?" she asked, with well-affected ignorance.

"Only that last night that fellow Stafford was talking in the smoking-room about ladies. He is a free-and-easy sort of man, and not altogether a good lot. He spoke of you—in very



high terms, certainly—but that he should mention your name at all seemed to rile Eliot tremendously. He shut him up sharp, in a way that astonished him; and the queer part of it was that you were the only lady for whom he took up the cudgels. He smote Stafford what you might call hip-and-thigh for daring to bring your name into any such conversation, and was quite serious, not to say very much put out. The argument I go on, therefore, is this, that he has met you before; nay, more, that you are old friends! Otherwise, why should he fight your battles, and be so excessively touchy about you?"

"We have met before, I confess, but please keep the secret," she confessed, raising her eyes and looking at him steadily.

"Is—it—pardon me—I have a reason for asking—is it a lover's quarrel?"

"No, indeed, it is not," she answered, rather faintly.

"And you are not engaged to him?"

"No."

"Then, Miss Darvall, may I speak. I've known you for some months now. I'm sure you have long guessed my secret. Hitherto I have scarcely dared to put my feelings into words; you are so much beyond me in every way. I've not much money, being only a younger son, but I like you, and I am sure that I could make you happy. I have been silent until now for fear you might think I was actuated by mercenary motives, that I was a fortune-hunter. But, indeed, I would have spoken long ago if you had not had a penny. The last day or two you have been more—more—gracious to me—and I have at last found courage to speak."

Captain Durand poured out the above declaration so hurriedly, and so passionately, that Mary's attempts (and she made several) to cut short the flow of this fervid eloquence were quite useless. When he did come to a full stop, she put up her hands, with a gesture that was enough to show him that he had spoken in vain.

"Oh! Captain Durand, I never guessed this! I thought—yes, that you liked me to talk to and flirt with, but I never dreamt of this. It is out of the question!"

"Why? Because you don't care about me?"

"Well, yes, that is one reason; but, besides—"

"Because I am a beggarly, younger son, and have had the insolence to raise my eyes to a girl with thousands a-year; because—"

"No; no that!" she interrupted. "And oh! do not be angry with me. I like you very much as a friend—very much, indeed! I'm not thinking of marrying! How dare I! You know my history!"

"And what obstacle is on your mind? What are you thinking of?" he asked, sternly. His looks demand an answer.

"I'm thinking that I must tell you my secret. I'm thinking of—of what my husband would say to this. I am a married woman!"

They were standing alone at the far end of one of the terraces, and their two figures stood out in strong relief in the white, all-searching light of a full harvest moon.

Other couples, who were wandering about and enjoying the balmy evening, had no time or inclination to give them a glance or a thought, save and except Captain Eliot and his partner, who sat under a not distant lime tree.

This long *tête à tête*, the eloquent, nay, impassive gestures of the man—an attitude of repudiation on the part of the woman—had not been lost on them.

"Do you see Mary and Captain Durand?" said Mrs. Clare. "I am not a person who bets or lays wagers, but if I were I would say that he has just asked her to marry him!" and she glanced at her companion with a smile.

"And she has said no!" he returned, with great promptitude.

"Yes; and given him some reason that has horrified him!" rejoined Mr. Clare, with some excitement. "Did you ever see such a start?"

"Never, poor fellow!"

"I believe I know the reason," said Mrs. Clare, thoughtfully.

"You do!" exclaimed her companion, suddenly turning and looking at her fixedly. "You know the reason? Did she tell you?"

"Oh, dear, no; the very last thing she would do! She is naturally a most secretive young lady!"

"Then how?"

"I found it out for myself!" she answered, with conscious superiority.

He paused, and after looking at the moon for nearly two minutes in dead silence, said very slowly,—

"And what do you think of it?"

"I think it shocking, horrible, disgraceful! I never—never was more upset in my life! I could not have believed it if I had not seen it!"

"Seen it! I wonder—I wonder very much, Mrs. Clare, if we are on the wrong tack? Has your discovery got anything to say to me?"

Mrs. Clare thought for a second, and then replied,—

"No more than it has to the man in the moon!"

"Oh!" really visibly astonished. "Then I wonder what it can be?" gazing at her rather wistfully.

"I daresay you do; but I am not going to betray her! She has given her reason to Captain Durand, no doubt; that is sufficient for him! I see that you also possess some weighty secret of Miss Darvall's as well as I do!" glancing at him, sharply.

"Well, yes; it is our mutual property. I don't mind making an exchange with you, Mrs. Clare. You tell me your secret, I'll tell you mine—for it is mine, too!"

"No!—no! Not now!" looking at him in a languishing manner as she spoke. "Perhaps some day! I find it hard to refuse you. I do, indeed!"

"Then, why run counter to your own wish?"

"Only for a little while," laying her hand in his. "You shall hear all in good time, for you know very well that I cannot say no to you, no matter what you ask!"

This was a strong hint; but when an elderly adventuress tries to win a man ten years her junior she must not stick at trifles, and this delicious moonlight night—the perfume of roses and mignonette, the stately Park, and the lovely surrounding scene—all made a most appropriate background for a love tale.

If he would only speak, now was the time and hour, and he would not meet with rude rebuff or startling statement like that unlucky young Durand, who was now hurrying headlong down the terrace steps alone, looking both wild and pale in the moonbeams.

"Hullo, Eliot!" he called out. "Could you come and speak to me for one moment?"

Max accordingly rose, and with an apology to Mrs. Clare, and a promise of his speedy return, followed his friend down into what was called the Rose Garden. As Mrs. Clare watched him away, she said to herself,—

"I wonder what is his secret, and what he knows about Mary? He would be astonished if he knew mine! They must have met before—but how and where? And how well they play their part of mutual strangers? Of course, now that I think of it, they come from the same place. He has known her as a pretty girl running to open the gates at Daneford, and seen her at dances in the servants' hall. Still, that could scarcely be called a secret. What can it be? What can it be?" knitting her delicately touched-up brows. "The idea of that odious little boy saying that Sophy Seymour wanted to make up a match between them is too amusing, even if they did not avoid and cut each other dead as they do! I hold a trump in my hand that would soon spoil that little game! I fancy the trick will be mine," pulling her lace mantilla round her shoulders with a smile. "A woman is only the age she looks. I look eight-and-twenty with my back to the light. I wear well. I am a handsome woman still! My

glass tells me that! What can be keeping him? What has that young booby got to say to him? I must be going in. All the others have gone. It's too bad to have our *tête-à-tête* disturbed in this way. However," smiling to herself, "another time will do as well. The game is in my hands. I don't care about hearts as long as I've plenty of diamonds and honours!"

With this remark to herself, and a bright smile upon her face, Mrs. Clare strolled very slowly back to the house.

## CHAPTER XXV.

"WELL, what is it, Durand?" said Captain Eliot, as he overtook his friend, "what is the matter, Jack?" as he suddenly turned round and confronted him with a face working with agitation.

"Plenty is the matter," he answered, fiercely. "I've just been proposing for a girl, and she tells me she is your wife."

"You mean Miss Darvall?"

"Yes, I do; and is what she says true?"

"Perfectly true. We were married four years ago!"

"Four years! And what do you mean by keeping it secret and allowing her to pass off as an unmarried girl and be made love to by men whom she makes a fool of? Explain it," said his friend, choking with passion.

"Did she not explain?" inquired his companion, coolly.

"No; she only told me that she was married to you, and then she burst out crying and ran away. I think, considering that you and I were such old friends, that we have done two campaigns, and been often under fire together, that—that—"

"I have treated you badly, Jack; so it seems until you know the whole thing. You shall hear it all now. We were originally married against our will. We parted at the church-door. After two years—she being still known as Mary Meadows—I came home. I repented of certain things I had said and done; I wanted to make friends; I offered to make her my wife in the sight of the world, to raise her to her proper position."

"And she—"

"Scorned my offer, as if it had been an insult. Then I went away for two years more; I came back, and find her here—find that Mrs. Maxwell Eliot is known to the world as Miss Darvall, the great heiress!"

"And are you still at daggers drawn?"

"Yes."

"And never mean to make it up?"

"Never is a long word!"

"And have you never thought of all the trouble and misery you may bring on other people? Girls might fall in love with you, in the innocence of their hearts. You are an uncommonly good-looking fellow, and men may and do fall victims to Miss Darvall. Look at me!"

"My dear Jack, I see you plainly. You think you are badly hit, but how many times have you been madly in love before? How many times have I been your unfortunate *confidante*?"

"Yes, that's true; those were all nothing. No one could hold a candle to her. She is lovely, she is divine! She is the prettiest girl in England, she—"

"And she is Mrs. Max Eliot! She never gave you any encouragement, did she? Now, honestly, Jack, between man and man?"

"She was always pleasant, and laughed and talked, and liked to be my partner at tennis."

"Oh, that's nothing! She did not tell you that she could not say no to you, as a lady was good enough to tell me this evening?"

"No! That was coming it strong! No, she never said much. She is no flirt, but you are, Max. Maybe that is the reason she has been so civil to me the last few days—just to pay

you out for the way you are going on with Mrs. Clare!"

"Mrs. Clare is old enough to be my mother!"

"She does not think so; and if you don't mind you will get yourself into a nice mess!"

"Rubbish!"

"You can't care very much for your wife when you can dangle after a painted old creature like that! She—Miss Darvall—is far too good for you, there?"

"So I fancy. And she entertains no doubt whatever on the subject herself. She hates me, I believe. And yet, I should not say so. She liked me once."

"When?"

"Before we were married. We did not marry to please ourselves. I was furious, and I made the stipulation that we should part after the ceremony. And she had her little condition too."

"And that was?"

"That she should never be known as Mrs. Eliot. That if she was called by that name, or identified with me in any way, she assured us all that she would go off and drown herself in a certain pool we knew in Cargort woods. She has had her way—I've have my way," added Captain Eliot, as he stroked his moustache.

"Well," ejaculated his friend, gazing at him with round-eyed surprise, "this is the rummiest story I've ever heard in all my born days! You must have been rather tickled when that little beast at dinner said that Mrs. Seymour wanted to make up a match between you and Miss Darvall."

His friend took no notice of this remark, but said—

"I see that we will have to do something, Jack. This contretemps that has happened to you must not occur again. I must speak to her, and gain her consent to give out the fact that we are married. This masquerading as Mary Meadows was bad enough—as Miss Darvall, the rich heiress, with swarms of suitors, it's ten times worse—it's both improper and intolerable."

"Yes," agreed his friend, "it may be play to you and her, but it's death to other people."

"I must take an opportunity of seeing her alone, and you will have to help me."

"Oh, I say! How could I help you?"

"You know there is to be a great picnic to-morrow to those old ruins; some will ride, some drive; by hook or by crook I must have a talk with her either going or coming. You must throw yourself into the breach if necessary, Jack."

"I don't see that at all."

"Come now, it's time to go in," laying his hand on his shoulder. "If you can't see it now, I am certain you will to-morrow. At this moment you are feeling rather sore with both of us, but I cannot help myself. Without her permission to speak I must be dumb!"

"What's at the bottom of all this row between you?"

"Pride! I was too proud to own her in the first instance, and afterwards she has had her turn!"

"I fancy it will all come right yet," said his friend, with a heavy sigh, and then they turned their steps towards the house in silence.

Miss Darvall was by no means a finished horsewoman, but she had a taste for riding, and few people would have believed that she had never been in a side-saddle till a year ago for the first time in her life. In riding to the picnic, she scored over Mrs. Clare, who was not an equestrian, and who was compelled to travel in the landau, after having made a bold and unsuccessful effort to enlist Captain Eliot as her chariotman in a small pony carriage.

Captain Durand held aloof from his late divinity, and his place was eagerly taken by the Hon. Bob Stafford who, after leading a very gay, not to say wild, sort of life, and having accumulated vast debts, began to think it was

time to marry—that he must look out for a heiress to "pull him through," and here, under the roof with him, seemed to be the very article of which he was in quest—a well-endowed, handsome young woman, with no relations who would be likely to make disagreeable inquiries, or to "tie up" her money strictly on herself.

Seeing that Jack Durand held back he now came forward, and threw himself into the vacant situation with unusual zeal, and laid himself out to be extremely agreeable to Miss Darvall, at whose right hand he rode all the way to Saltwood Castle, the scene of Mrs. Seymour's picnic.

Captain Eliot and one of the Misses Berry rode in the rear of this couple as they wound along pretty country roads, lined with wide grass borders, high woods, and sweet-scented hay fields.

Captain Eliot did not prove to be nearly as lively a companion as Miss Berry had expected. He was silent and abstracted, and talked, when he did talk, at random. His whole attention was constantly fixed on the couple in front, and he never permitted them to get out of his sight. When they trotted, or cantered, he did the same.

His companion wished that he was quarters as amusing as Mr. Stafford, who seemed to talk ceaselessly to his fair charge, and gesticulate with one hand, as if he were telling something very interesting, or something very funny; for Miss Darvall would laugh—a very pretty sly laugh; and when she laughed, or when Mr. Stafford bent towards her, confidentially, and laid his hand on her horse's neck, Captain Eliot would frown and gnaw his moustache!

Was he going in for the heiress, too? If he was, it was really too tiresome!

The whole party reached their destination without the smallest adventure. They passed under the old gateway, up a kind of causeway, and came to one of the largest and best-preserved Norman castles in England.

The castle was not to be explored till after lunch, and everyone was quite ready for that meal. As nimble men-servants opened hampers, and spread tablecloths, and bottles of champagne, and raised pies, and hams, and tongues, and cold salmon made their appearance, the guests, with agreeable anticipations of pleasures to come, set off to explore the walls, the old chapel, the towers that were on the walls, and the tilt-yard.

Young ladies climbed spiral staircases, and stumbled along the tops of ivy-covered walls in their riding habits, the most venturesome of these being Miss Darvall, who was rather vain of her strong head and capacity for standing on giddy heights, and delighted in the screams and expostulations of the other ladies!

At lunch there was a discussion on the subject, and some people said it made them giddy to look down, even from a box in a theatre, or a gallery in church.

"I don't mind where I stand, or how high!" boasted many. "I'm not the least giddy! I would not mind standing on the tip-top of that tower!" looking up at the lofty old keep above them.

"Oh, there's a wall round that!" said a girl who was exceedingly jealous of the pretty heiress. "You must show your courage in a more dangerous place than that. It was all very fine walking along the top of those walls"—pointing as she spoke—"they are not more than twenty feet high, and you could not have come to much harm if you did fall; but," looking up at the castle (they were seated under some trees close to what had once been the castle chapel), "will you stand out on the little embrasure, or sill, in front of one of those long windows you see, near the top?"

"Certainly, if you wish it! I shall have a superb view of the country, and see from Canterbury to France, across the Channel!"

"Miss Hall is only joking, Miss Darvall," said Captain Eliot. "She knows you are not a steeple-jack. She does not want, I am sure,

to see you break your neck! I am certain that I don't!"

"It is perfectly safe!" she answered. "Of course, if I were giddy I should not try!"

"Giddy or not, I hope you will be dissuaded from making such a dangerous experiment!"

"It is not easy to persuade or dissuade Mary to do anything?" put in Mrs. Clare, with a smile, as if she were making a most flattering remark.

"I know that!" returned Captain Eliot, who was sitting beside her, and speaking in a low voice. "No one knows that better than myself!"

"What did he mean?" thought Mrs. Clare, rather uneasily; but the signal for the ladies to depart, and gossip among themselves leaving the men to smoke and gossip too, being given, she had no chance of questioning her companion at present.

After some time everyone proceeded to explore the interior of the castle (and most delicate business it was), ascending the very ancient crumbling stairs that connected each story. In some places a whole step was wanting, and in the large, low rooms portions of the flooring had given way; and it was really only the most courageous and enterprising of the party who ascended to the top story.

Among these were all the young men, Mary, the two Miss Berrys, Miss Hall, and Mrs. Clare. Yes, Mrs. Clare concealed the tortures she was enduring, and was apparently the boldest of the bold.

She liked being helped up dangerous stairs, and piloted acrossed sunken floors, and led through narrow, little, dark passages by the companion upon whom she had fastened from the moment they entered the ancient pile—that is to say, Captain Eliot.

The gaily chattering, laughing company at last arrived in a low, large room, which, said the guide (a woman who lived below, and whose husband farmed the surrounding land), was said to be where the conspirators arranged for the murder of Thomas à Becket, where they rode to, on landing from France, and from whence they started for Canterbury.

"It looks like the very place for a plot!" said Mary, glancing around.

"Yes; and the very place for a view! Here you are!" added Miss Hall. "This is the window we were looking at! Would you be afraid to stand out there?" (with considerable emphasis on the word "afraid.")

"Afraid! I never was afraid in my life!" returned Miss Darvall, stoutly. "If anyone will give me a hand, that I may step through! I shall stand on the place you wish, and view the landscape over!" turning to the embrasure, and gathering up her habit as she spoke.

Various dissuasive voices were raised against this fool-hardy experiment, and raised in vain. The spark of contemptuous defiance in Miss Hall's eye had set her opponent's vanity at defiance. Go she would! She was just about to step out, when Captain Eliot and his companion joined the group! His face blanched visibly as he took in the situation.

"You are mad!" he exclaimed, stretching out his arm. "It is suicide, Mary!" in a lower voice. "I forbid you to do it!"

"Forbid me! What nonsense!" shaking off his detaining hand. "There's no danger! It's all a matter of imagination!"

In another second she was standing out three-hundred feet above the tilt-yard without the smallest protection.

"The view is magnificent I can see—ah!" and with a piercing shriek, that turned her hearer's blood to ice, she disappeared.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

It needed a brave heart to step out on the same narrow ledge and look down. Captain Eliot had a brave heart, and he was there in a second, standing upon that dizzy height.

"She is caught," he gasped, "by her habit on a hook about six feet down. So far she is



safe. Who will lower me after her? Here," to Miss Dare, "your sash will hold!" tearing it from that trembling young lady.

It was a very wide silk Indian sash, about four yards long; and in another second he had along it under his arms, and yet another, he was out over the castle wall.

He knew there was not a second to be lost. Mary's life hung literally by a thread. All the weight of her body was upheld by a piece of cloth which was hooked into a rusty old iron machion. She was caught near the waist, and, luckily for her, was not hanging head downwards—but how long would this state of affairs hold out?

Captain Eliot was a well-known athlete—the gymnasium instructor in his regiment—and he was the very best man to depend on in the present emergency. One moment, and he was down; one moment more, and he was returning with a dead weight in his arms, for she had fainted.

"Take care!" he shouted. "Mind the sash does not cut on the window ledge. Hold it far out till I am well alongside!"

As he spoke he was on a level with his listeners. Then he handed in his burden first, and then climbed in himself. The whole horrible episode had not lasted three minutes from the time of Miss Darvall's shriek till she was back, and laid safely on the rickety old floor, with Mrs. Clare's salts to her nose; but the time to the horrified spectators had seemed to be at least half-an-hour.

Berry face was ashen. Beads of perspiration stood on the men's brows. All the women were shaking like aspen leaves, and Miss Hall was in strong hysterics. It is one thing to read of a tragedy—it is another to see it happen before your very eyes. The hearts of those assembled felt precisely like the Psalmists, when he describes it of "melted wax."

Of course, Eliot (whose pluck and presence of mind had saved the girl, and spared the spectators the ghastly sight of seeing her dashed to pieces on the flags below), was the hero of the occasion; but all the attention was given to her as she lay stretched out, her head in Mrs. Clare's lap, looking like death.

However, after a very short time, she opened her eyes and looked round in a dazed, bewildered fashion, and asked, as she moved her head from side to side,—

"Where am I? What has happened? What, sitting up, suddenly. 'Are you all looking so solemn about? Oh!' covering her face with her hands and shuddering, 'I remember, only something caught me as I fell!'"

"Yes, and only Captain Eliot went down after you!" added Miss Berry; but to these two things neither of them added the other alternative.

After a while people recovered the use of their tongues. Miss Darvall recovered her hat and her power of walking, and a certain amount of self-possession; but her nerves were all to pieces. As the party descended the stairs she and her preserver were left to bring up the rear, and she clung to his arm as they descended almost as if she were a drowning person.

"Oh!" she gasped, as she shook all over, "I've never felt like this before!"

"Because you never were so near death!"

"And you saved me, Max! What can I say to you for saving my life?"

"Give it to me to take care of for the future!"

"I don't know. No!—no! Not that!"

"At least, give me some payment, Mary! Let me ride home with you!"

"Oh, yes; that is not worth asking for!"

"And give me a kiss of your own accord now."

"Now?"

"Yes, here; on these old stairs. No one is looking, and even if they were?"

"If they were I would not do it," colouring and holding up her face, which had quite recovered its proper tinge by the time they

reached the hall, and the advance guard of the party, who were volubly relating Miss Darvall's terrible adventure to those elders who had not made the ascent. Of course, Miss Darvall must drive home; room could be made in the landau!

But, in spite of Mrs. Seymour's prayers and entreaties, Miss Darvall elected to ride. She would ride very slowly. She would take her time. She thought that it would do her good and steady her nerves; and she had her way, and brought up the rear of the cavalcade at a foot's pace, with Captain Eliot, according to promise.

"Mary, I have a great deal to say to you," he said, as they watched the last rider turn a corner, and they found themselves entirely alone. "We cannot go on in this way, you know. We are a fraud on society."

"Yes, I've been thinking that too," she returned very eagerly. "Especially—"

"Especially since Jack Durand asked you to marry him!" added her companion briefly.

"Yes, but I had thought of it before, and I have a plan to suggest—a capital plan."

"A plan! Let us have it by all means!"

"Such a marriage as yours and mine, made without love or inclination on our parts, but simply to satisfy our elders—"

"Yes, yes," impatiently, "but the plan?"

"Surely no marriage in the sight of Heaven it could not be. Nothing binds us tighter together in the faintest way but that miserable bit of paper, the register."

"Oh! And what would you do with that miserable bit of paper, as you call it?" turning, and looking at her fixedly.

"I would destroy it," she answered simply.

"So that is your plan?"

"Yes! Supposing, to make it more formal, you and I were to go together to St. James's, ask to see the register, and you engage him in conversation whilst I cut it out with a pair of scissors and put it in my pocket. I will give it to you, and we will put it in the nearest fire!"

"And we would both get seven years' penal servitude at the least. Your plan is, though you may not know it, common felony."

"I don't know much about technical law, but I do know a little of common sense. We release one another, and we do each other a great benefit, and we do no harm to another soul—we should be free! Think of that, and think that no one knows of our marriage, and that nothing but a paltry entry in a book stands between us and happiness!"

"I'm not so sure that it stands between us and happiness," he answered coolly. "Are you so very anxious to break the yoke?"

"Yes."

"Well," rather piqued, "you must allow that it has not galled you much?"

"It is not so much for my own sake as yours that I want to be released."

"For mine! Thank you. I prefer having the matter as it stands in St. James's."

"But you would like to have some choice? You would marry some one else."

"My choice would still be you, if you would have me; but I'm afraid you would not. However, we are as tightly bound together as anyone else, and you will have to put up with me! Besides, several people now know our secret—Mr. Montagu and Captain Durand—you told them, not I. And now, Mary, I once said I would never ask you again; but—no, I won't ask you again; you must ask me. One thing only I insist on doing—I shall proclaim our marriage to all our friends. You can still live your own life if you like, but it must be under the name of Mrs. Eliot. I am sure you can see that for yourself."

"Is there no other way?"

"None."

"It will seem so very odd."

"It will; but you can rectify that by leaving Folkestone and taking up your residence under my roof."

"May I have two days to think of it?" she

asked, after a long silence, as they rode up the avenue of Rose Court.

"Yes; ten, if you like."

"Do not think that I don't like you, Max. How can I help it? You have kept your word honourably. You have been most generous to me. You have just risked your own life to save me from a horrible death. I care for you very much; but there are things to be considered besides myself."

"I am to be considered too, am I not?" lifting her off her horse.

"Yes, you shall be considered too."

"And, Mary, you have both our happiness in your hands now. You will never be so mad—so wicked—as to throw it away, will you?"

"No, I think not."

"And you will give me your settled determination to-morrow?"

"Yes; but you said I might take ten days!"

"And a kiss now?"

"Yes."

Mary carefully avoided her husband for the remainder of the day. She did not appear at dinner, and he was thrown entirely into the arms of Mrs. Clare, who made every use of her opportunities, and engaged him in a game of chess, whilst livelier spirits played "nap" and poker.

As they were poring over the board, Tommy came up to say good-night; and, after watching them steadily for some minutes, said,—

"You don't know what I saw to-day!"

"No," moving a bishop; "and I'm sure we don't care," returned Mrs. Clare.

"Oh, but I think you would care; and I'll tell you for a shilling!"

"Rubbish! I have something else to do with my money!"

"It's not rubbish! It's a great lark! It's something I saw. I'll tell you, and no one else!" jumping up and down as he spoke.

"Here!" said his cousin, producing a coin, "I'll give you this to take yourself off!"

"Half-a-crown! Oh, crickey! Well, but first I'll tell you, now I'm paid for it!" he said, winking diabolically at Mrs. Clare.

"It's about him! I was looking out of the window when he and Miss Darvall came home; there was no one saw them but me!"

"Shut up, you young fool!" said his relative, hastily.

"No I won't! I saw you lift Miss Darvall off her horse, and you kissed her, and she did not mind a bit! And you called her Mary, too—now!"

In another second the youth was beyond the reach of reprisals—he was gone!

"He ought to be well whipped for telling such untruths!" said Mrs. Clare. "What a wicked child!"

"He did not tell any untruth this time," said Max; "though his bringing up leaves much to be desired."

"Then—then—" becoming livid under her rouge, "you did do what he said—you kissed her!"

"Yes!"

"I wonder you are not ashamed to sit there and confess it!" returned the lady, trembling with rage.

"I have no reason to be the least ashamed!"

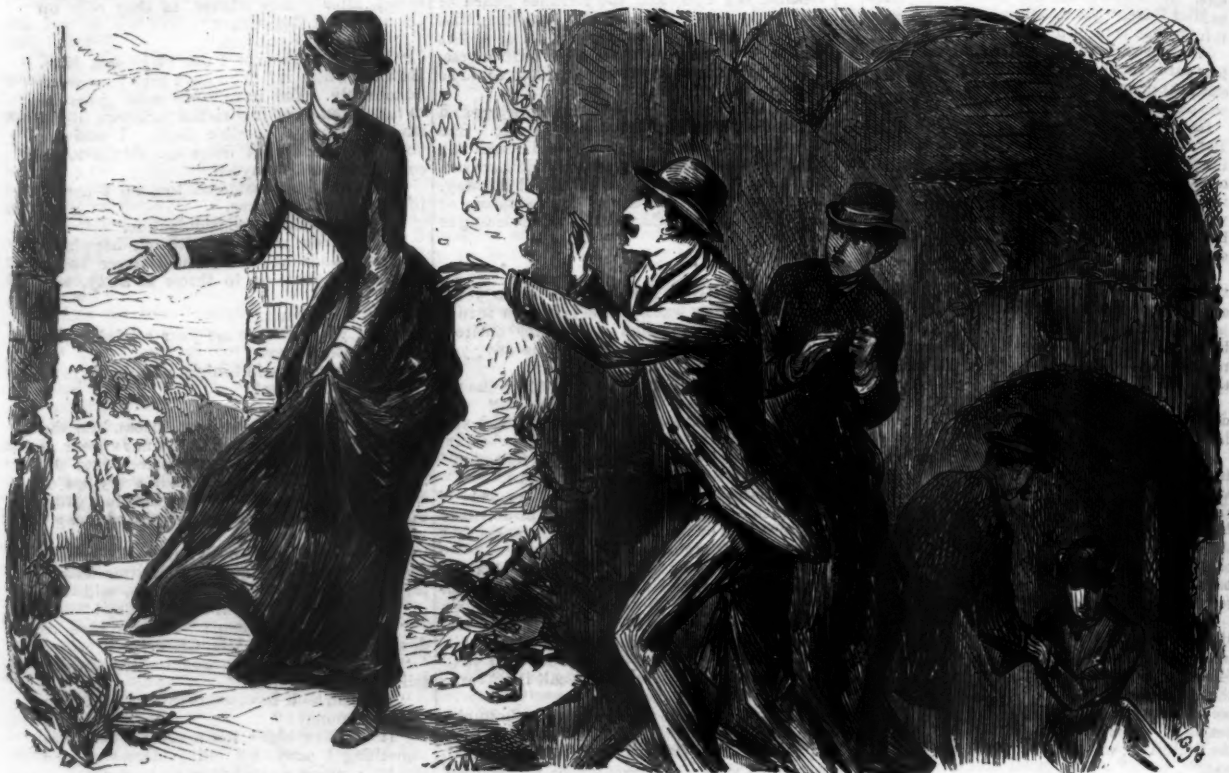
"What! an unmarried girl?"

"Mrs. Clare, let us understand one another!" he said, gravely. "I told you that Miss Darvall and I possessed a secret in common. That secret will soon be no longer. In a week or two it will be known to the whole world! Meanwhile, I am going to impart it to you now! You shall be the first to hear it. It is something that will surprise you a good deal. Four years ago Miss Darvall and I were married!"

"Married!" echoed Mrs. Clare, in a hoarse whisper. "Impossible! I don't believe it!"

"—upsetting half-a-dozen chessmen."

"You can verify the matter by an examination of the church register at St. James's, Caversham. She was Mary Meadows then. It was not a marriage of affection. We parted then and there, and have never lived together."



["YOU ARE MAD," CAPTAIN ELIOT EXCLAIMED. "IT IS SUICIDE, MARY!"]

since No, have scarcely seen each other since, till you —"

"Then whose?" began Mrs. Clare—but she suddenly stopped. She thought she saw her way to a very neat and complete revenge upon this too handsome and too agreeable young man. So she mastered herself, and said, with wonderful composure,—

"And so this was your secret? Something like a secret. I am astonished! Do tell me all about it."

And, nothing loth, he commenced, and told the whole story, from first to last, winding up with—

"I behaved very badly at the first go off, Mrs. Clare; and she has punished me, as you see. But I think it is going to be all right now. She is going to let me call her Mrs. Eliot, and claim her as my wife!"

Here his listener saw her castle in the air come down with a crash. In his short conversation she saw that she lost not only a lover, but a most luxurious home. The Eliots would not want her. She could see, by the eager, fervid way he spoke, that Maxwell Eliot was very much in love with his wife. His wife, and not live with her! She did not see or understand that the attention he had paid to her (far less than she had paid to him) was because, though not the rose, she was near the rose, and his pride forbade him to make any more advances to Mary Darvall. She must take the first step—and she would!

Little did he guess at the storm of fierce heart-passions that he had raised in his hearer's breast. Outwardly, though her smiles were rare, her interest was friendly and sympathetic. All the while she was thinking where and how she could best plant a poisoned dagger in his heart!

"You have been so good as to tell me your secret, Captain Eliot, and I, in turn, will tell you mine—to-morrow. No, not now! One word of advice," she added, emphatically, "a friend's advice! Do nothing rash till after you know what I have to tell you. Do not

claim Miss Darvall as your wife—as Mrs. Eliot, before all the world, till you see her as she is—in her true colours! If you do you will regret it all your life!"

With this enigmatic remark Mrs. Clare rose slowly, pushed back her chair, and, bestowing a warning glance upon her late companion, sailed majestically out of the room.

"What on earth does the woman mean? She talks and looks like a tragedy queen!" muttered Max, as he collected the chessmen.

What does she mean? She means mischief, my innocent young man, and you will know her meaning quite soon enough! Meanwhile go and cut in among that merry party at the round game, and forget Mrs. Clare!

The next day was to bring two important pieces of intelligence to Max Eliot—Mary's decision and Mrs. Clare's secret. The morning passed without any news from either of them, and in the afternoon everyone was going over to a grand polo match near Folkestone. Some went by rail, some drove. Max, who was a capital whip, drove a neat turn-out and pair of chestnuts, and thought how nice it would be to have had Mary for his companion for the twelve miles; but instead of her he had his cousin, Sophy Seymour, who lectured him over and over again for his celibacy, his indifference to his own interests, and her hopes that after his gallant rescue of Mary Darvall he would "follow it up" by paying her some attention.

"She is worth it, I can tell you," she added, impressively. "And that odious little Tommy was right. I did ask you here, Max, on purpose to try and make up a match between you. It seems almost intended by Providence; your two places join, you are both young and good-looking. Where could either of you do better?"

It was on the tip of her cousin's tongue to tell her their secret, but he refrained, saying to himself, "better tell it all together this evening, please goodness, or to-morrow at the furthest." And he said very compositely,—

"I'm awfully obliged to you, Sophy, for your good intentions, and I think I shall have a piece of news for you within the next twenty-four hours that will please you very much."

Mrs. Seymour guessed what that piece of news was when she saw her cousin and Mary Darvall walking up and down the grass in earnest conversation, and subsequently sitting on a bench, with their backs to the polo, engaged in the same deep discussion behind Mary's huge white parasol.

"It is all right, Mrs. Clare," said Max, rising and approaching her as she walked past in magnificent array. "Come over with me," indicating his companion, who was now all smiles and blushes. "Come along, and let me be the first person to introduce you to Mrs. Eliot."

"Before accepting your kind offer I must tell you my little secret!" rejoined the matron.

"Make some excuse. Get someone to take Mary into the luncheon tent, and come away with me for half-an-hour."

"Half-an-hour?" he echoed, in dismay.

"Yes, fully that or more."

"But—?" he began to protest.

"But it is your duty to come with me, and my duty to tell you everything before you publicly accord your name to one who does not deserve it."

"Of course you will prove your words, Mrs. Clare?"

"That just what I am going to do! Please go, then, and arrange with her for a short absence, whilst I get a good fly!"

In a few minutes Mrs. Clare and Captain Eliot were quietly driving away together towards Mrs. Gibson's cottage.

(To be continued.)

There are natures which blossom and ripen amidst trials which would only wither and decay in an atmosphere of ease and comfort.





["DORA! DORA! FOR THE LOVE OF HEAVEN, SPEAK TO ME!"]

NOVELLETTE.]

## A FORGIVEN SIN.

—:O:—

### CHAPTER IV.

MARRIED, NOT MATED.

THERE was real regret at Riversdale when Captain Radcliffe's drag arrived, and the news of Elise's accident spread among the departing guests, for the girl was a general favourite, with her bright ways.

Mr. and Mrs. Dunraven, Dorothy, and Captain Radcliffe were at last the only watchers left, and they were anxiously looking out for the village cart, but no sound of Puck's quick footsteps met their ears.

Down to the gate again and again they went, but no pony carriage came in sight till the shades of evening were closing them in.

"You will tell Dorothy?" whispered Elise, clinging to her lover's arm.

"I will; but you must leave me to find the opportunity. I cannot do it abruptly."

"I should like her to know at once."

"And have me turned out of the house! No child; if you want my company, you must be patient. When do you return to school?"

"Must I still go, Edmund?"

"I don't know; I must think about it. How long is your vacation?"

"A month. There is a week gone, nearly."

"Very well. You must be cautious, darling, or you will spoil all. Leave everything to me, and I will pull the affair through. See, they are watching for us. Is your foot painful now, Elise?"

"I had forgotten it! but, yes, it does hurt me."

"Elise, my dear child! I am so sorry you have injured your foot!" cried her mother, frowning over her.

Sir Edmund lifted her out with his power-

ful arms, as though she were an infant, and she clung to his side for support, far more than the occasion demanded.

"What makes you so late, Drake?" asked Mr. Dunraven, somewhat sharply. "We have been looking for your arrival a very long time."

"Yes, I am afraid so," he returned, quietly.

"You see if we had gone out of a walk it would have caused Elise pain."

"Of course it would," said her mother at once, "and those little carts do jog most unmercifully. I can't bear them; take a second arm, my dear!"

"Yes, will you?" cried Captain Radcliffe, eagerly. "I shall be so glad if I may help you."

She glanced up questioningly into Sir Edmund's face, and saw it darken.

"I think I would rather manage as I am," she replied, hurriedly. "I want to hold up my dress."

"Why, my dear, it is quite short!" remarked her mother in surprise.

"Not short enough; it impedes my movements when I am lame," said the girl, irritably. "Do not tease me, I am in pain."

They all fell back from her, and Sir Edmund led her into the house, and himself took off her hat and gloves.

Then he stooped and spoke a few words to her, and left her comfortably ensconced in an easy chair, and turning, he met the earnest eyes of Dorothy fixed on him.

She had not spoken one word since their return home; there was something in their faces which silenced her, yet she could not tell what.

Now meeting him thus she felt she ought to speak, yet knew not what to say.

She laid her hand gently on his arm, saying,—

"I hope you are not tired, Edmund?"

"Sir Edmund, this footstool is too high for my foot!" cried Elise, irritably.

The Baronet turned from Dorothy with a smile.

"Not at all, thanks," he answered. "Elise and I found each other very good company," and he readjusted the cushion for the girl, and left the room to prepare himself for dinner.

Dorothy felt chilled and sad at heart. She said a few kind words to her sister and went upstairs also, and, having locked her door, she knelt beside her white-curtained bed and buried her face in the pretty coverlet of silk and lace and prayed. When she arose from her knees Dorothy's face was angelic.

She dressed hastily, and waited in the window till Sir Edmund left his room.

Then she went to him and placed her hand in his confidently.

"I want to thank you, dear, for your kindness to Elise, and your care of her. It was very good of you to take charge of her, and I am afraid you found her a wee bit irritable."

"Not in the least! I enjoyed my drive with her! She is a charming girl!"

"Yes! she is."

He stood aside for her to pass, but still she lingered.

"Edmund, have I vexed you?" she said, at length.

"No! what made you think so, Dora?"

"I can hardly tell. There seems to be something different between us. Surely something has annoyed you, dear?"

He hesitated a moment. It came upon him with a sense of pain that he was playing a deceitful part; but the false step had been taken, and he could not now draw back.

"Yes; I have been annoyed! There is nothing more calculated to put a man out than to be made a fool of before a lot of people, as I was to-day!"

"It was no worse for you than for me, Edmund, and I am sure no harm was meant by it!"

"If you liked it, Dorothy, that is another matter. I didn't!"

"Of course I don't like anything which vexes you!" and she touched him softly with her hand.

"Yet you were uncommonly friendly with that man, after you were aware of the fact."

She looked at him, the expression of his face was neither soft nor kind, and she shrank back abashed.

"I am sorry," she said, and passed him with a dash of hauteur in the pose of her shoulders.

He stood still, and watched her down the stairs, with his own heart sinking within him.

"Poor little Dora!" he murmured; "poor little woman! that was the first blow, and she felt it. Ah! well, it will be easier if she learns to hate me; and yet I thought I loved her. Elise, Elise, to what are you luring me? Am I giving up the gold for gilt? Well, there is no drawing back now! I suppose old Dunraven will forgive us when the fact cannot be undone? Elise is, I think, his favourite of the two; and she must wheedle him. She will have as good a fortune as her sister, I conclude. Elise will do me more credit in the world, young as she is! She will love a London life. Dora would always want to be at home! Yet surely home with her might have been a bright enough place! Well, it is not to be; the die is cast!"

He would think no more, but running hastily downstairs he sought out his host, and dived straight into politics—a subject on which Mr. Dunraven was hot, and one which lasted all the evening.

And so the days went on.

Sir Edmund, in reality, engaged to both these girls, and the breach between him and Dorothy imperceptibly widening.

She certainly loved him none the less; the very pain he caused her to suffer made her but doubly conscious of her deep affection for him, which yet she could rarely show, for he chilled her, and touched her pride.

At length he decided on going away. He had had a long stolen interview with Elise, and had made all his arrangements with her.

He had casually told Mrs. Dunraven that he was going to France, and had offered to escort Elise across the channel, an offer gladly accepted by her mother, and acquiesced in by the other members of the family.

So, after a fortnight spent at Riversdale, he went to London, where Mrs. Dunraven was to meet him, and give her younger daughter into his charge.

This she did, and even saw them off by the train; but at the next station Sir Edmund and Elise alighted, and returned to the metropolis to the lodging which he had taken.

It was too late for a marriage to take place that day, except by a special license, so, after a convivial dinner together, he repaired to his hotel, and the next morning they were married by a regular license in a London church, in the parish where he had spent three Sundays, and as man and wife they started for Dover and the Continent.

"I shall never go to school again now!" exclaimed Elise, with a sigh of relief, as she flung herself back on the soft cushions of a first-class carriage.

"No, darling, I shall be your schoolmaster!" "How did you manage about my age?" she asked, suddenly. "You had to swear I was ever so old—hadn't you?"

"Yes; just so. I had to swear it, and I did," he laughed. "It was a very white lie."

"But it is perjury, is it not?" said the girl, with a bewildered look. "Couldn't they punish you for it?"

"I daresay they could if they took the trouble," he replied; "but who is to know whether you are fifteen or twenty-one?"

"I shall not be fifteen till next month!"

"Nonsense, my love, you will be two-and-twenty!" and they both laughed heartily.

"You don't regret Dorothy?" questioned Elise, after a pause in the conversation.

"Don't let us talk of her, Elise. I have behaved like a scoundrel to her, and don't wish to be reminded of the fact."

"You will have to get over that; you and she will have to learn to be only friends."

"When a man and woman have once been engaged, it is almost impossible to slip into such a friendship." Then he suddenly leant forward—"Do you know, Elise, that Dorothy and I are engaged still?"

"You promised you would tell her."

"Yes! And I shall have to tell her, but I never had a task I liked so little. She was such a trustful, confiding little creature. I hope this will not break her faith in goodness!"

"It seems to me, Edmund," said Elise lastly, "you are thinking more of Dorothy than of me?"

"Of course I am thinking of her. I shall have to write and confess what a sneak I have been," he said, bitterly.

"Edmund!"

"Well?"

"It is not very pleasant to hear you speaking of our marriage almost as though you regret it!" And she burst into tears.

"For heaven's sake, don't upset the water bucket, Elise! The prettiest girl looks ugly with red eyes, and a man expects his bride to look her best on his wedding day."

"Do you only care how I look?" she said, bitterly.

"It certainly was your beauty which lured me from Dora!"

"Lured? I don't like the word!"

"Perhaps not, but I can't change it, Elise. I knew you were tempting me from the path of truth and honour, but I could not resist you. I was always a weak fool where a pretty face was concerned."

"Edmund! have you ever cared for anyone else?"

"Cared? I believe I cared for Dorothy more than any other woman! But of course I have had plenty of fancies. What man has not? But they don't last!"

"Edmund, how can you?—And is yours a fancy for me?"

"A very great fancy, I should say," he returned with a smile, slipping his arm round her, "or I should not have acted the part I have done, or made you my wife."

"And this fancy is to last, then?" she said, smiling at him.

"Indeed, it is to be hoped so, as we have to spend our lives together."

He drew her to him, and they both soon forgot how near they had been to quarrelling. She was fond of Dover, and showed a child-like pleasure in running upon the heights, scrambling over the old ruins, and watching the silver-crested sea below them.

"I like this old place, Teddy!" she said irreverently. "I am glad we are not going on till to-morrow."

"Why do you call me Teddy, Elise?" he questioned. "It sounds as though I were a butcher-boy!"

"I don't care for the name of Edmund, and I do that of Teddy!"

"As you like! A rose is as sweet by any other appellation!"

That night he wrote to Dorothy, telling her all the truth.

What he said to her no one ever knew, for he declined to show Elise his letter; and if Dorothy kept it, it never passed out of her hands; in fact, no one was aware she had received it.

Mr. and Mrs. Dunraven noticed that the girl had changed very suddenly; that the faint rose-tint had departed and left her marble white; that she moved as though life were a weary thing to her.

That the soft eyes were terribly pathetic, and that the sweet lips would often quiver, as with suppressed pain; but no word escaped her as to the cause of her sufferings.

Then came two letters to her parents, from Elise and her husband, confessing their secret marriage.

Mrs. Dunraven wept copiously, which relieved her; Mr. Dunraven stormed like Jove; but that did not alter the fact that his

favourite child had deceived him, and that she was married.

But Dorothy said nothing. She neither blamed nor excused, and her silence irritated the infuriated man, who forbade that any member of the household should be made acquainted with the marriage. It was to be kept a profound secret from all the world; and having packed his portmanteau he started for London, without a word of information to his wife or Dorothy as to his movements.

"Dorothy!" said her mother, kindly, "I need not tell you how sorry I am for your great trouble!"

"I am sure of it!" returned the poor girl, simply. "I thought I must have died at first, for oh! I did love him so deeply; but it is all over now, and I can bear it!"

"Dear child, you will find someone else more worthy of you by-and-by!"

She raised her hands as if to stave off her mother's words.

"No, not never! Mother, promise me not to mention his name to me again!"

Some weeks afterwards Mr. Dunraven returned home, bringing Elise with him.

He desired that she should be received as though nothing had happened, that no questions should be asked her, and that it should merely be stated that she had not been well enough to remain at school—a declaration which would be readily believed with one glance at the girl's white face.

Dorothy heard her father's orders in silence and obeyed him implicitly, and the old life went on at Riversdale—the same, yet how changed!

Mr. Dunraven had got Elise away from her husband by powerful levers—two threats.

If Sir Edmund did not let her return to her home, he vowed he would have him up for perjury; and, moreover, he would neither give her, nor leave her one penny.

These arguments, added to the fact that he had found his marriage with this headstrong, passionate child a mistake, decided the pleasure-loving man of the world to let her go, even though it was against her will.

Elise had not found in her married life the freedom she expected.

Sir Edmund looked sharply after his young wife, severely reprimanded any levity in her conduct, and was very different to what he had been in those stolen passionate love-moments, when the heatings of their own hearts was all to which they had listened.

"She is too young to be a wife," said Mr. Dunraven, sternly. "I would have put the marriage aside altogether had it been possible; but it is not. You can claim her when she is seventeen."

Elise cried till her tears were dry, but her father was obdurate, and her husband had decided against her.

"We cannot live on air, Elise," he told her, without much tenderness. "I had counted on your father's affection to induce him to make you an allowance. As he declines so doing, we have no choice but to part. I cannot keep a wife on my small means—certainly not such a girl as you are, Elise. Your expenses, even in this short space of time, have been ruinous!"

"Well, you always want me to look nice, and I could not go about with you in my school dresses! You would have been ashamed of me!"

"Possibly; but it has opened my eyes to the future!"

"Edmund! your fancy for me is dying out, like your other fancies! You do not love me, or you would not let me go!"

"Do not say such things, Elise, dear!" he returned, while her words stung him with a sudden revelation of their truth.

He had given up all to gain her, to gratify the whim of the moment; and, too late, he knew that his feelings for her had not been love, but a brilliant spurious flame, which was now burning low indeed.



## CHAPTER V.

## THE FATAL PHOTOGRAPH.

Two years passed wearily away, sometimes spent on the banks of the Thames, sometimes in London, or travelling abroad; but the old restfulness had left the home life, the serpent had entered there.

Captain Radcliffe had proposed for Elise, and had been quietly, though firmly, refused by her father.

No one knew of the secret marriage, and Elise was fast forgetting the man to whom she was bound, or thought of him only as a barrier to her own enjoyment and advantage.

Her passion for him was a thing of the past, and she had now been taught by her parents to mistrust and dislike him, and in her own heart to blame him for doing the very thing which she had so eagerly desired—marrying him.

She could see now how unadvisable such a marriage had been; that she was far too young to know her own mind, or to undertake wifely duties; she could see also, how cruelly her sister had been treated.

Dorothy had been an angel of goodness to her. She and Sir Edmund between them had ruined her life, and yet no word of reproach had ever escaped her lips. She was quieter, graver than ever; that was all.

But Elise was not grateful to her sister. People seldom love those whom they have injured, and Elise did not love Dorothy.

Mr. Dunraven had put the younger girl into the charge of the elder, a task not too pleasant for the latter, and Elise resented this, looking upon Dorothy more as her jailer than anything else.

And now the time had come when Sir Edmund must be expected to claim his wife, and Mr. Dunraven grew irritable and morose. One day he entered the room where Dorothy was sitting alone at work.

"My dear," he said kindly, "you behaved very well in your trouble, and you have shown a forgiving spirit towards your sister; I commend you for it, and now I have some fresh work for you to do. You and Elise must leave here for a time."

"Oh! papa! what, leave home!" said Dorothy. "Yes! you have plenty of sense, although you are not very old; and I have decided to trust Elise to your care. I have taken a small cottage far away in the country, in the centre of a wood, and I have secured the services of an old woman to attend on you, who was your mother's monthly nurse when you were born. You will, I fear, find it dull, but you will have the satisfaction of knowing that you are doing your duty."

"Is this step necessary, papa?" asked Dorothy. "I have no desire to question your motives, but it is a strong measure to hide us from the world, as you propose doing."

"I have decided on this line of action, Dorothy; and if you do not go with Elise, I must get someone else to do so. And how am I to know that I can trust anyone else?"

"Very well, papa, you must know best what is right. Just tell me what my duties will be, that is all!"

"They are easy to define. Be your sister's companion always, and let me know if anything unusual occurs."

"And how long is this state of things to last? In Elise not going home to her husband?"

"Dorothy, I forbid you naming that man either to me, Elise, or anyone else. Do you understand me?"

"Yes; I understand, and will, of course, obey you!"

Thus it was settled, and suddenly the Miss Dunravens, as they were called, vanished from sight.

Friends, who inquired after them, were told that they were quite well, and had gone away on a visit; but to whom, and where this visit was being paid, not one of them could find out. Then Sir Edmund Drake arrived. Once

more it was summer time at Riversdale, and the man remembered the day when he had first gone there to ask shy little Dorothy to be his bride.

He sighed impatiently as he thought of it, and he recollected the girl's likening the winter floods to the loss of faith in the one she should love; and he wondered if his desertion of her had wrecked her life, and left it sad and desolate; or whether even now fresh flowers were budding or blooming in her innocent heart.

There was the boat in which they had passed that quiet, happy day before Elise's return, lying rocking lazily with the flowing river.

Should he see Dorothy, and once more feel the small hand nestle in his own? No; he might see her, he might even touch that hand, but it would never rest in his again as it had done. His sin against her might be forgiven, but it never could be put aside.

He started as he realized that it was to his old love his heart turned, and not to his wife, when once more he found himself within their home.

The butler was a new one, and did not know him, but he showed him into the large drawing-room, where Dorothy had awaited his coming—where he had told her of his love and gained hers in return—where he had kissed her innocent lips, and held her to his heart.

A groan escaped him as he thought of it, for long since he had realized what he had lost. He glanced quickly round the room for her books and work—well knowing her favourite little tables, and their accustomed nooks; but there was no longer any sign of the girl's presence, and a shadow of disappointment fell across his heart.

The door opened, and Mr. Dunraven entered. He would not clasp the Baronet's outstretched hand, but signed to him to be seated.

"May I ask to what cause I am indebted to your presence here?" he inquired, coldly.

"The two years are up," returned Sir Edmund; "and I have come to make arrangements with you about Elise."

"What arrangements, may I ask?"

"What arrangements! Well, Mr. Dunraven, I conclude you will wish your daughter to take her proper position in the world as my wife, and I hope you will see your way to assist me in providing for her needs. You were willing to settle something considerable on Dorothy, and I presume you will be equally generous to your younger daughter, who is, I believe, your favourite child."

"Yes; you are right!" returned the other, slowly, and deliberately. "Elise was my favourite child. I was very proud of her; I used to tell myself she should wear a coronet, and that her beauty would gain it! Elise should certainly have had half my fortune at my death, and as much as I could spare her during my lifetime had I seen her mated with a suitable man!"

"If I was suited for one of your daughters, Mr. Dunraven, you cannot have much to find fault with me as a husband for the other?"

"Excuse me; I have every fault to find. Elise is a far more attractive girl than Dorothy, and would naturally marry better. Moreover, I thought you then a man of honour; now I know that you are not."

"Mr. Dunraven!"

"It is useless, sir, to swagger to me. You have behaved like a blackguard, and cannot expect me to treat you as a gentleman. No one but ourselves knows of your conduct. For your own sake I should advise you to keep it quiet; and now, sir, our interview may as well come to an end."

"Not till I have removed my wife from your keeping," said the Baronet, through his set teeth, his handsome face livid with rage.

"When you find the lady in question you can assert your authority."

"Find her? Do you mean to tell me that she is not under your roof, when I entrusted her to your charge?"

"She is not under my roof. No stipulation was made that she should remain there."

"Mr. Dunraven, you have cheated me! You told me I might come for my wife in two years, and you led me to believe that all would then run smoothly between us."

"Yes! I told you that you could come, and you have come; and you are now, I conclude, satisfied that, however infatuated Elise might once have been, your influence over her is now a thing of the past. For the rest, I never led you to believe anything one way or another."

"And Dorothy!"

"How dare you breathe her name, sir?"

"I must know. Is she unhappy? Does she suffer?"

"She is utterly indifferent to a man who could so treat her."

It took a good deal to crush Sir Edmund, but he sat with his face hidden from view, and a great bitterness filled his soul.

"Will you not, then, tell me where Elise is?" at length he asked.

"Most certainly not."

Then he rose white and stern.

"You will live to regret this day, Mr. Dunraven," he said, with a voice hard and cold. "Elise has not the nature to go unscathed through such an ordeal as this to which you have subjected her;" and, turning, he left the room without another word, going back into the world, as far as it knew, a single man, and from this time, mixing recklessly in its rushing current of gaiety and dissipation.

In the meantime Dorothy and Elise, under the care of old Mrs. Lister, their mother's sometime nurse, travelled all night, and a part of the next day into Scotland; and were met at a quiet station by a carriage and two horses, and driven many miles before they reached their final destination.

Over the heather-clad moors—past the dark pine trees, away into the wildest region of the "land of cakes," and then the carriage stopped at the entrance of a wood, and the driver alighted.

"There is a footpath on, miss," he said, addressing himself to Dorothy; "and I can tie up the horses and carry your luggage, but there is no way to drive up to the 'Wee Cot.'"

"Very well, we must walk then," she answered wearily, and got out at once.

"I'm awfully tired!" complained Elise. "I wonder if there are any beds ready for us?"

"That's all right, miss! You will find my wife at the cottage, and she has made everything comfortable; and I am to take her back with me this afternoon!"

"Are we, then, to live in this desolate place alone?" demanded Elise, crossly, of her elder sister.

"Hush, Elise, the man will hear you! Is it for your sake or mine we have come?"

"Heaven only knows; for neither I should say! If I had not chosen to return to Edmund I need not have done so! He sent me home against my will, and I should have stayed there against his!"

"You know your own business best, Elise; but, remember, I am forbidden to talk to you of Sir Edmund Drake."

She passed on to Mrs. Lister's side.

"Have you ever been here before, Nurse?"

"Yes, my dear! It was I who told Mr. Dunraven of it! You shall hear the story of the little house some day, when I know you better. You will find it a very pretty little home!"

It broke upon their view as she spoke, and it was, indeed, all she had said, and more. A tiny-gabled cottage, thatched with golden straw, and covered with honeysuckle and roses, backed by blue-green pine trees, with an undergrowth of fern and heather, while a rivulet clear as crystal ran rippling over many ragged stones, and rugged rocks, only divided from the house by a small garden filled with shrubs and flowers.

"How lovely!" said Dorothy, pausing to gaze at the little place.

"It is fairy land!" cried Elise; "only there is no prince to make it perfect. Mousiey,

how on earth are we women to kill time here by ourselves?"

"I shall have plenty to do!" returned Dorothy. "I have brought both books and work, and my sketch-book, too. We shall be all right, depend upon it!"

"That is so like you, Dorothy; you never will complain!"

"Of what use is it?"

"Why, it does one good, at any rate. Come in, and see what it is like inside. Oh! it is pretty enough. I wonder if papa furnished it, or took it as it is? Do you know, Mrs. Lister?"

"He took it as it stood, but he came down himself and brought many modern comforts."

"What! Has papa been down here?" cried Elise.

"Yes! He came and settled everything himself, and found me, for I was living within a few miles, you know."

"No! I didn't know. Papa never tells us anything," returned Elise, crossly.

"Ah! well, my dear, he has his reasons, I suppose," and the old woman bustled about to get the luggage settled in the small rooms.

Some weeks had passed, and everything seemed to be going on smoothly at "Wee Cot." From time to time letters addressed to Mrs. Lister came to them from their parents, which they were only allowed to reply to through the same medium.

Dorothy's greatest trouble was her sister's restless irritability, and her perpetual complaining that she had nothing to do.

"Would you like to fish, Elise? I see there are rods here on the wall," said her sister, with a smile. "It might amuse you!"

"Of course it might. I will begin this very day. I have seen men throw a fly. I will teach myself. Will you try, too?"

"I am too small," returned Dorothy, shaking her head. "I couldn't manage one of those rods at all."

"All right! I would rather go alone. I shall have no one to laugh at me!"

Down she pulled the fishing tackle, and chose what she needed; and having dressed herself in a blue serge dress trimmed with white, and a hat to match, with a short skirt and Hessian boots, she peeped into the room and bade Dorothy adieu.

To do Elise justice, she was quite unconscious of the size of the property; so when she came to a low fence, she did not realize that so far she might go, and no farther.

As it was, she saw that the rivulet became wider, and the banks were easy to fish from on the other side; so she just climbed over, and went on thrashing the stream with such small knowledge as she possessed, and came suddenly face to face with a gentleman engaged in the same sport.

"Oh!" she laughed to herself, "then there is a prince, after all. Now this is fun! What would papa say?"

And she lifted two beautiful dark eyes to his handsome, surprised face, and blushed as she met his open gaze of admiration—but not with annoyance.

"Pardon me," he said courteously, "but you do not throw your fly rightly. If you will allow me I will show you the way—you are evidently a novice at the art."

"Yes! I never tried till to-day, and I want to do it properly. I have nothing else to amuse me. It is so dreadfully dull here, and we never go outside our own grounds."

"You must be outside now, I think!" he said, with a smile.

"Indeed no. We are living at 'Wee Cot!'"

"Really! Then we are neighbours. But you are now fishing my water!"

"I am very sorry, I am sure. I did not know I was trespassing!" she laughed.

"I hope you will continue to trespass as often as you like; I shall be more than pleased to see you."

"Thank you; but I wonder where our land ends?"

"At the little fence. Don't you remember it?"

"Oh! yes. I got over!"

"Now let me instruct you, Miss—. By what name shall I call you?"

"By none," she laughed. "Papa is afraid someone will run away with me, and he is going to hide me here till I grow old and ugly, and he thinks there is no chance of it left!"

"I don't wonder that he is afraid," he returned, laughing too. "But, surely, you are not at 'Wee Cot' alone?"

"Oh, no! my sister is with me; and we have a good dragon to guard us, of course!"

"Does you think I might call?" he inquired. "I ought to do so, as your nearest neighbour. It is inhospitable of me not to do so."

"Are you fifty years old, with a wife and large family?" she asked. "If so you might possibly be allowed to come!"

"I'm afraid I can't claim such high honours!" he replied, thoroughly amused.

"Then you cannot enter our gates. If you do we shall be spirited away. I wish you could; I long for someone to talk to."

"You said you had a sister?"

"Oh! Dorothy's a book-worm!" she said, with a little mouse mutine.

"Now I know your sister's name!" he laughed.

"Oh! that was a *lapsus lingua*."

"Couldn't you make another?"

"If you talk you will frighten the fish," said Elise. "Now, is not that the right way?" as she threw the line, with much grace, but little skill.

"It looks very pretty, but it is not right," he answered. "Look at me. That is the way. Cannot you do it so?"

She tried, and managed it at last; then suddenly stopped.

"If Dorothy misses me she may come to look after me!"

"And if she did, what then?"

"I should not be allowed out again, that's all!"

"Miss Dorothy seems to be a nice sort of young lady. A bit of a Tartar, eh?"

"No; it is not fair to think that. Dorothy is as meek as possible; I call her Mousey. But papa has made her promise, and she will never break her word. She is very, very good. And now here is our boundary. We must say adieu!"

"Let it be *au revoir*."

"How can I?"

"Where there's a will there's a way. Will you promise to come and fish again? I have spent such a happy afternoon!"

She looked away and remained in thought till his gaze compelled her to turn to him, and the earnest, eager eyes hastened her answer.

"Yes; I will fish again!"

"With me?"

"If you are there, how can I help it?"

"I will wait for you by the fence from dawn till dark," he laughed.

"Don't, for goodness sake. Dorothy might see you! Keep round the curve, and you will not be visible from our land!"

"I will obey you, and you will promise to come to-morrow?"

"I will do nothing of the kind! If I fish I may come this way, and if I come this way, and you chance to be here, we may meet."

"Very well! I shall certainly chance to be this way at ten o'clock to-morrow morning!" and, raising his hat, the young man helped her over the fence, watched her out of sight, and with a half-sigh, turned back along the river bank.

"My fate!" he murmured. "I little thought that I should meet it when I took this quiet out-of-the-way place for a little fishing and shooting! Yes; I must win you, my pretty *incognita*, or know the reason why!"

"Well!" said Dorothy; "how have you got on? You have been a long time gone, Elise? I began to get a little fidgety, and would have tried to meet you, but did not

know whether you had gone up or down stream."

"I am glad you didn't. It always makes me feel rebellious to be looked after!"

"I don't want to look after you, Elise, as you call it! You ought to know that by this time!" she answered, a little indignantly.

"I'm a brute, Mousey, a perfect brute. I didn't mean to hurt your feelings—only I am certain that if anyone tried surveillance on me I should evade it, and be off!"

"Where, Elise?" she inquired, with a half smile.

"Not to Sir Edmund Drake!" she replied, defiantly; and slamming the door, left the room.

Dorothy sighed heavily.

"Whatever he has done, he has been punished! To gain such a wife as Elise, and then to lose her, and her love, it is very sad for him; and how he must have cared for her to make him sacrifice all, even honour itself, for her sake! Oh! he is, indeed, heavily punished!"

And once more she picked up her book, but could not follow its meaning.

"If she loved him enough to take him from me, how can she so have changed?" and she rested a sad and weary face between her hands, and was very still.

Elise continued to persevere with her fishing, which was a relief to Dorothy, and they all enjoyed the speckled trout which the girl brought home.

Dorothy had been very brave, but there came a time when her nervous system, which had been so long at tension, gave way suddenly, and the girl kept her bed from utter exhaustion. Mrs. Lister enjoined perfect quiet and rest. The woman did not like to call in a doctor for fear her young ladies might get talked about, and she felt herself quite competent to pull poor Dorothy through.

This she explained to Elise, begging her to be as quiet as possible in the house, and the girl obeyed her. Thus it was, that she had far more freedom for her meetings with her fisher acquaintance.

Elise found life a dull thing, and his companionship made it brighter, so she indulged in it.

She had no thought of any evil arising from it.

Her knowledge of the world was very limited, and she never dreamed of this pleasant companion degenerating into a lover; but such he undoubtedly did, although the change was so gradual that she felt no shock or alarm.

Nor was she aware that young Lord Conway was one of the fastest men in rapid London.

That the charm of his society was daily growing upon her she knew; but it being the one pleasant thing in her monotonous life, she shut away the thought.

It was not reasonable to expect her to give it up, she told herself.

Since Dorothy's illness Elise had wandered at her will with Lord Conway straight down the stream, past his own grey-stone mansion, and far away over the moors.

Passers-by wondered where the beautiful girl had come from, and shook their heads to see her alone in such company.

She even ventured to have a few drives with him, and one day he took her into the town to which she had come by train, on her way to "Wee Cot."

They passed a photographer's, and Elise thoughtlessly exclaimed,—

"What fun it would be to be photographed!"

"So you shall," he laughed. "We will be done together," and they were, Elise little dreaming of the disastrous consequences which would arise from that one indiscreet act.

The following day Elise went to fish as usual, but no Lord Conway met her. He had been obliged to go into the town on some urgent business, but had entrusted his valet to walk along the bank and give an unaddressed letter to the young lady he would find fishing



there—to explain his absence, and appoint a fresh hour for meeting.

It so happened that Elise was more occupied with watching for Lord Conway than with fishing, but unwilling to acknowledge the fact even to herself; she would not give up one for the other, and walking one way, while looking in a different direction, she suddenly lost her balance, and fell heavily over a steep piece of bank into the water, striking her fair forehead against the hard stones and rocky projections.

It was fortunate for her that the valet happened to arrive just in time to see the accident, and, running to the spot, he quickly lifted the insensible girl on to the grass bank; but having got her so far he was bewildered what to do with her, for he had no idea who she was, or where she lived.

He had seen her with his master, and concluded she was one of his new fancies; and so at length decided upon carrying her home with him, and having her taken care of till he should arrive.

This he did, and being unable, even with the assistance of his fellow-servants, to restore animation, he sent off one of the head-grooms on horseback to fetch a doctor.

Lord Conway returned before the medical man arrived, and was greatly shocked to see Elise in her present condition, heard all there was to tell about her accident, and praised the valet for his discreet action in the matter.

"Yes! she is better here," he said. "I can then look after her."

Then, after a pause of thought, he called the man back to him.

"If anyone wants to know who the lady is, you can tell them she is my wife, and that will stop their tongues."

"Yes, my lord," answered the man, gravely, not in the least surprised at his master's new whim, having been with him since his boyhood, and knowing his wild ways.

"His wife!" he laughed, when out of ear-shot, "poor young girl! I doubt if she will ever be that, or any other woman either; he is too fond of change!"

"Who am I called in to see?" inquired the doctor, in broad Scotch, addressing the valet, as he alighted from his gig.

"Lady Conway, doctor."

"Lady Conway! I wasn't aware that his lordship was a married man!" and he followed the valet upstairs, where Lord Conway met him, and conducted him to a room opening out of a bed-chamber, where the girl was lying upon a couch, white and still.

"How did this happen?" asked the medico; and his lordship explained the whole circumstances of the accident to him.

"Concussion of the brain!" announced the man of medicine. "Who will nurse her?"

"I will, myself!"

"Vera weel; her maid also, of course, will wait on her?"

"Yes, of course!"

"I can send you over a nurse, if you like—an experienced woman," said the doctor.

But Lord Conway, remembering that such people carry news from house to house, declined the well-meant offer.

"We will do without her, if we can, doctor."

"Her leddyship looks vera young!" remarked the doctor. "What maun her age be?"

"Seventeen!"

"Ah! Too young to marry to my mind. What has she done with her marriage ring?" he added, somewhat suspiciously.

"She must have dropped it in her fall," replied the young lord, unabashed.

"Weel, call her maid, and get her to bed. I'll go down with you and have a wee drap of whiskey, and then look at her again."

Her maid! Here was a difficulty.

"All right," he answered, and leaving the room held a conference with the faithful valet.

"I'll manage that, my lord! Maggie McCloud will answer all the purpose. The girl is honest and faithful. She will believe anything I tell her, and keep her own counsel."

"Oh, that is the way of it, eh, Ferguson?" said Lord Conway, smiling. "Like master, like man. Well, send Maggie up, and make her understand she is no longer housemaid, but Lady Conway's serving woman."

And he returned quickly to the bedroom.

There was great consternation in the mind of Mrs. Lister when no Elise returned to Wee Cot that night, and the more so that she dared not tell Dorothy of her sister's absence.

Morning dawned at last, but no Elise arrived. Looking up the cottage and Dorothy in it, the harassed, much-distressed old woman ran through the wood-path, hoping to meet someone to carry her telegram to the next town, for she had made up her mind to telegraph to Mr. Dunraven the news of the loss of Elise; and at the same time she knew she must do this without exciting the suspicion of the postal authorities, in that quiet little town near the banks of the Thames, where everyone knew everyone else's business.

Lord Conway's valet was riding along the road. He had been over to fetch Elise's medicine, and Mrs. Lister stopped him with the request that he would carry the telegram for her, as she was in trouble.

The man was good-natured enough, and promised to do so, accepting the golden coin given for his trouble; but decided on first carrying home the medicine.

Lord Conway met him, and he mentioned that he had seen an old woman who seemed in great distress, and had asked him to send off a telegram for her; and his lordship, recognising Elise's dragon from his description, announced that he was himself on his way to the town, and would do it for him. The paper changed hands, and also quickly changed its destination.

It was addressed to Mr. Dunraven, at Riversdale, and contained one word only.

"Come."

But Lord Conway at once decided that Mr. Dunraven must not come!

So the telegram was torn into small pieces and flung aside.

In the meantime Mr. Dunraven began to look for news, and Mrs. Lister became unutterably anxious at his non-arrival; and so much worse did Dorothy grow, that she sent for the doctor, regardless whether he might talk or no.

He came, and he *did* talk; and although he was telling her all she desired to know, his words held no meaning for her, for he informed her that he was attending the young Lady Conway, who had met with an accident, and was seriously ill.

"Perfect quiet," was all he could prescribe for poor weary Dorothy, who scarcely cared to open her heavy eyes, or to speak to him, "and to take her medicine regularly."

In the meanwhile Elise grew better in health, but her mind had not become clear.

Lord Conway's yacht was lying on the coast, not six miles from Craigstone Hall, and his lordship decided to carry off his prize.

He did not even inform the doctor of his intention, but sending him a cheque which more than repaid him for his trouble a dozen times over, he informed him that business had compelled him to leave suddenly, and to take Lady Conway with him; and the doctor ran his fingers through his thick iron-grey hair, and shook his head; and said no more to anyone about Lady Conway, for he was Scotch, and cautious.

"Craigstone Hall" was advertised to be let. August was just beginning, and there was but little difficulty in finding a new tenant, for it, for the shooting was good.

Mr. Raynsford, who took it, was a rich man, who had made his money in trade, and he loved to gather men of family around him. He was a bachelor, and a lot of sporting characters were invited during the month, among whom was Sir Edmund Drake.

Mrs. Lister had waited long for some reply to her telegram, but receiving none had

written a lengthened account of the disappearance of Elise, and of Dorothy's illness.

The earliest train brought Mrs. Dunraven to Scotland, but her husband went first to seek an interview with Sir Edmund, believing that he had in some mysterious way found out Elise's hiding-place, and had carried her off. The Baronet had left London, but his address was forthcoming.

When Mr. Dunraven found it was Craigston Hall he gave up all hope, travelling by express to Scotland, to try and make the best terms he could with Sir Edmund, lest he should lose his daughter altogether, but he took Wee Cot, en route to apprise his wife of this unexpected news, and to see Dorothy, and then on to Craigston Hall.

Sir Edmund Drake had just returned from his host from shooting, and looked bewildered to see Mr. Dunraven.

"Is anything the matter with Elise?" he asked, closing the door to ensure privacy.

"That is what I am here to ask you," said Mr. Dunraven, sternly.

"I don't understand you."

"Nonsense."

"What is it you want to know?"

"What you have done with my daughter?"

The two men stood facing each other passion

pale.

"What I have done with her? It is I, sir, who have to ask that question of you. Where is Elise?"

"Heaven knows, if you do not," said the father in anguish.

"I do not know; I have not seen Elise since you took her from me, nor have I heard from her. You would not allow me to write to her, and I conclude you did not permit her to write to me; for I have never once heard from her, and all I have heard of her is what you yourself told me, which, you are aware, was not much."

Mr. Dunraven sank into a chair, and a deathly pallor overspread his face.

"She was my favourite child," he murmured, more to himself than to the other.

Sir Edmund paced the room like a caged beast; at length he stopped before the stricken man.

"Tell me all there is to tell!" he commanded, more than asked. "I have a right to know!"

"Yes, you have the right. I have little to tell you, save that Elise is gone. I thought, of course, she was with you."

A long pause, and then the husband asked,—

"Where had you hidden her?"

Mr. Dunraven walked to the window, and, raising his hand, pointed to the little wood a mile away up the stream.

"There is a cottage in that wood. I thought she would be safe there. The only house in the neighbourhood is Craigston Hall, and when I came down to see the cottage that was empty."

"Who was with her?"

"Dorothy, and an old nurse of my wife's. They were unaware that Elise had ever been beyond the precincts here."

"Had she no friends?"

"None!"

"Nor correspondents?"

"No! Up to the time of Dorothy's illness she had been well taken care of; since then Mrs. Lister naturally could not be in two places at once."

"I see," said Sir Edmund, at length, "you simply buried her, and made her life unbearable, so she has escaped from it—somewhere. Do you remember my words, Mr. Dunraven? I told you you would regret your conduct as regards Elise, and you see I was right. I am sorry for you, and I am sorry for myself. You have wrecked your daughter's life and mine. You cannot wonder if I have no very friendly feelings towards you."

"I do not wonder at anything now!" returned the man, who seemed to have suddenly grown old. Then he asked, "Are you going to look for Elise?"

"No! If her absence can ever be satisfactorily explained I might receive her again; but not till then!"

Mr. Dunraven turned to the door without another word, and walked with unsteady steps to Woe Cot.

A few days after Sir Edmund Drake was walking through the town, and stopped to look at some photographs in a shop window, when one arrested his attention.

It was that of a young girl with fishing-rod and basket, with a short skirt and Hessian boots, and the costume was of dark serge with braidings of white, and a sailor-hat; and by her side was a young man he knew well—a rich, wild, young sprig of nobility—Lord Conway.

With deep anger in his heart he entered the shop, admired the photo, inquired who the piscatorial lady was, and asked if he might purchase a copy or two of the picture, as it was very pretty; and left the shop with the likeness in his pocket, the information that the pair were Lord and Lady Conway, and hatred in his heart.

That Lord Conway had been for a short time at Craigston Hall, he had heard from his host, Mr. Raynsford; and he now returned there to make inquiries.

What little he could learn from the one or two servants who remained in the house confirmed his suspicions.

Lady Conway had met with an accident, and had come there suddenly. She had been very ill, and had been attended by Dr. Gordon, and she had left in a carriage some time since, much better in health, but a little queer in her mind, people thought; and that was every word they could tell him.

He next went to the doctor, who corroborated the statement of the servants, and had but little else to add, for he was unaware where Lord Conway had conveyed his wife.

That night a letter was delivered to Mr. Dunraven at Woe Cot by one of the servants of Craigston Hall, with one of Elise's photographs enclosed; and these words were written in the envelope: "Your daughter is with Lord Conway." That was all, and by the time it reached the unhappy father, Sir Edmund Drake was on his way to London to see his solicitor.

That the girl he had abducted was Miss Dunraven Lord Conway had guessed from the address and tenor of the telegram he had destroyed, but that she was Lady Drake, or that there was a Lady Drake, he was completely innocent.

Great, therefore, was his surprise when he was served with a notice from the Court of Divorce for having taken away Sir Edmund's wife.

Elise's mind had never thoroughly recovered its balance. She seemed like a child, and appeared to have no remembrance whatever of her past life.

When Lord Conway asked her about it, she was a bewildered, puzzled look, but he could gain no information from her at all.

So he let the case come on, and did not trouble even to defend it—being still abroad—and a decree nisi was granted to Sir Edmund.

Lord Conway paid the damages required of him, and waited for his reward; but Elise did not improve.

He took her to a celebrated Italian physician, who gave no hope of her recovery, and the young lord grew very weary of his charge.

He returned to England, and placed the poor girl under the care of a medical man; and the world talked freely of the affair.

Mr. Dunraven, hearing it canvassed, went to Lord Conway.

"Is she your wife?" he asked, simply.

"My good old man, how could I marry a girl who is out of her senses? Few men would care to do it. She has been to me as a sister—nothing more."

"Why, then, did you abduct her?"

He shrugged his shoulders,

"Had she not been so afflicted, things would probably have been different."

"Did Elise love you?"

"She liked me, certainly. I had not asked her for love; but I felt I could gain it."

"And you will swear that she has never been more to you?"

"I swear it!"

"Then why did you allow the divorce to proceed?"

"I had not then given up all hope of her recovery. I cared for the girl; and what judge would have given the case in her favour, however innocent, since she had been weeks alone in my company? Believe me, it is best as it is. There was but little published. The story will be disbelieved, or forgotten, before your daughter is of age. What do you wish to do with her?"

"I will take her home!"

"A wise and good decision, Mr. Dunraven; and her sister will take care of her."

"What do you know of her sister?" said the old man, suspiciously.

"Only what she herself told me about her—that she is very good!"

"When you are on your dying bed, Lord Conway, you will remember your conduct to Elise, and it will not help you through the dark valley!"

And having obtained his daughter's release, he went with an invalid carriage, and drove her straight down to Riversdale, changing horses by the way.

And the father's words rang unpleasantly in Lord Conway's ears, and haunted him. He seemed ever to hear them afresh, till he would have given ten years of his life to blot out the page in his history which had caused them to be uttered!

Elise slept for many hours after her return home, and her mother and sister watched beside her, lovingly and patiently.

There were many detrimental rumours afloat about Elise, but no one knew the true facts of the case.

Captain Radcliffe called on Mr. Dunraven, and had a long, long interview with him.

He had been bewildered and distressed beyond measure at the various reports against the woman he so truly loved; and now he asked the sorrow-stricken father to tell him all, giving his solemn word never to reveal her secret, whatever it might be; and Mr. Dunraven, with a heart yearning for sympathy, conceded to his request.

"Poor Elise!" said the Captain. "She was so very young—nothing but a child. Who can blame her? Not I, who love her, at any rate!"

Elise's father clasped the young man's hand, and tears stood in his dim eyes.

"Heaven bless you for those words, Radcliffe! Yes, she was very young, and Drake was a handsome fellow and an accomplished man of the world. She had no chance against him!"

"Poor child! of course she had not. It is too late now to wish she had never met him, and the only thing we can do is to strive to forget it—be thankful she is free of him!"

"Yes, she is free; but at what a price? Disgrace!"

"If Lord Conway's story is true, and I see no reason to doubt it, Elise's only fault was meeting him clandestinely."

"I did that! I drove her to that!" moaned the father. "If I had let the girl enjoy her young life it would never have happened!"

"You cannot alter that now; and, for the rest, Providence seems to have intervened, and shielded her from the selfish designs of a bad man. That same Providence may yet restore her to reason, and Elise may have a happy and peaceful life like other women!"

Mr. Dunraven shook his head.

"Who would take my poor girl now?"

"Any man who truly loved her. I would, Mr. Dunraven. You refused me once; but, if Elise loved me, you might let me have her!"

Tears slowly trickled down the rough cheeks

of this old man of business, and he squeezed the hand of the other with an iron grasp.

"You are a noble fellow, Radcliffe!" he answered, in a choked voice. "There are not many men I love, but I love you, Hugh Radcliffe, with all my heart!"

## CHAPTER VI.

### FORGIVEN.

ELISE returned slowly, but surely, to health and consciousness—gradually took more interest in the things and people around her, showing a marked preference for familiar objects, and most especially she seemed happy in the companionship of her childhood's friend, Hugh Radcliffe.

Not one of them ever spoke of the past to her, and she seemed as though it were blotted from her memory, or if she remembered, she never alluded to it.

At times tears would course slowly down her cheeks, and a troubled, almost frightened, look would come into the beautiful eyes, which were once so bright, and now had become so pathetic.

Two years passed, and the cure was complete. Home comforts and love had brought the girl back to almost her own bright self.

Then Captain Radcliffe spoke once more to Elise's father, who warmly approved of his decision to ask her to be his wife. So, one day, when she was sitting alone in the flower-clad verandah, he came and took a seat by her side.

"Elise," he said, taking her hand, "Do you remember what I said to you four years ago, the day you drove with me to Burnham Beeches? I said when you were older you would understand me better. You are older now, dear, and I have made up my mind to tell you what is in my heart. Elise, I want you to trust yourself unhesitatingly to me. I know every particular of your past life; more, probably, than you know yourself, and I want to guide and guard it in the future."

"You know of my past life?" she asked, with a great wonder in her eyes.

"Yes, dearest! Do not distress yourself by trying to remember one detail. I have nothing to do with the past; but, Elise, I want you to have implicit confidence in me for the future. I have loved you ever since you were a tiny child, Elise, and I want you to give me your love in return."

"I did that long ago," she answered, with a quiet and happy smile. "You have been so very, very kind to me ever since—ever since—"

"Since you came home! Yes, darling, and ever since then I have meant to ask you to be my wife."

She started a little. A deep flush overspread her face.

"I do not know! Am I free?" she asked.

"Free as air, dearest! I free to be married as soon as ever you please!"

"Are you quite—quite sure?"

"Perfectly certain!"

She began to feel the third finger of her left hand, as though searching for her wedding-ring.

"Are you sure you know every thing?"

"Yes, love! I know that you were married when you were only a child; but that marriage has been set aside, and you are free to become my wife!"

A great quivering sigh of relief ran through her frame, and she clasped the hand that held hers tightly.

"Oh! Hugh, I am so very glad! I feared had wrecked my life!"

"Thank Heaven such is not the case!"

"And Dorothy, do you think she is ever sad?"

"Dorothy is an angel. She will joy in your happiness as if it were her own."

"I wonder you didn't love Dorothy, Hugh. She is so much better than I am—so much more worthy of your affection."



"How could I, dearest? My love was all yours!"

She gave him a grateful look, and crept closer to his side; then he gathered her to his heart and held her there for a long, long space.

Elise's wedding was over; the chill autumn days were rendering Riversdale less pleasant than usual, and the Dunravens decided to go back to London for the winter.

To Dorothy the place was very dear, and she was taking a survey of every part of it as a sort of good-bye to her favourite haunts, when she came suddenly upon one of the least used entrances to the grounds.

It was only a low iron-gate, leading into the meadows; but it commanded a view of the house, and it was hidden from her by some thick bushes, till she was close to it.

When she drew near she started, for upon the top bar leaned a man with his face buried in his hands.

Her footsteps aroused him, and she stood face to face with Sir Edmund Drake—sadly altered from the *debonair* man of the world, who sought and gained her love only four years ago. Now he looked middle-aged and careworn, and silver threads were plainly visible in the thick, dark, closely-cut hair.

Neither had expected this meeting and the two who once had loved, stood still, and looked into one another's eyes. Then Dorothy turned away, and would have left him, but he stretched out his hand to her with a look of anguish.

"Dora, Dora! for the love of Heaven, speak to me!"

She stopped at once, and advanced towards him—nay, she went close, and gave him her hand, and he clasped it in both his own with an eager, hungry action.

"Dora! will you forgive me?" he pleaded. "Look at me, and see what I have suffered! I have known neither peace nor happiness since I so madly and wickedly gave up your pure love for a heated fancy, which I awoke from too soon—even to enjoy the shadow at which I had clutched—too late to retain the reality I had relinquished, and thrown away. Dora, Dora! pity me! I am a very wretched man!"

"I do pity you, and have forgiven!" she replied, in her soft, tender accents. "Sir Edmund, I wish I could see you happier!"

A great radiance spread over his face at her words.

"Do you! Is it possible that after my black conduct you can care one iota whether I am happy or miserable, or what becomes of me?"

"I care very much," she returned, gently. His whole features quivered; in vain he tried to repress his agitation.

"Dora!" he said, in a low voice of intense feeling. "Do you remember your telling me that if the flood should come and wash away the flowers of your love and faith, they would never bloom again—that no other flowers could ever be planted in the garden of your heart?"

"Yes! I remember. My memory is good."

"Have none others been planted, Dora? Have four years passed, and have you let no other fill my place, even though I was so worthless?"

"No other has filled your place," she replied, softly.

"And is your opinion the same still? Dora, can no other flowers bloom for you?"

She shook her head, sadly.

"It is best not to talk of the past, Sir Edmund. It is dead. The flowers can bloom now only on its grave, to remind us that for a short time—a very short time—the blessing of love was granted to us!"

"Oh, Dora, must it be so? Could not you forget, as well as forgive, and take the poor penitent back into your heart? Dora, did my wickedness kill your love for me, or is there one spark left which I could warm and cherish to bring joy back into my life? Oh, Dorothy, I lost all in losing you. Can you not give me back one flower from the rich rare blossoms which bloomed for me then?"

"You have never left my heart, Edmund. I have prayed for you night and day, but what you ask is impossible. Elise is my sister. Had she been any other woman I would have listened to you, but I could not marry my sister's husband, even if she were dead."

"She is free, and married to another. Why should her shadow blight our lives?"

"It is contrary to my ideas of right and wrong, and it is not allowed by the laws of our land."

"I do not know, in the case of divorce."

"Let us talk no more of it. It cannot be."

"Is this your only reason, Dora? Are you sure my sin does not rankle in your mind? Are you sure it is forgiven?"

"Quite sure!"

"Dora, come close to me. How these bars divide us? This gate seems an emblem of our lives—a barrier which cannot be set aside. I tried to open it just now, and found it firmly trusted together; but you can still come near to me, little one, and let me look into your eyes, and feel your sweet influence, and touch your soft hand. Dora, may I kiss you once—just once!"

She raised her face and met his lips with hers, and he held the hand she had extended to him, as if it had given him new life. The careworn look was no longer in the man's face.

"Dora, you are my only love; badly as I have behaved," he said, passionately.

"And you are mine," she returned, so low that her words were hardly audible.

"And may I come again, little one?" he asked, wistfully.

"No, do not come, Edmund. It is too hard a task to say no to you. I cannot bear it," and she lifted a face full of pain to his.

There was a seat in the hollow of an ancient oak, close by the spot where they were talking, which was yet totally hidden from view, and on that seat Mrs. Lister was resting when Dorothy came that way.

She did not like to move when the conversation began, and, growing interested, determined to hear it to the end.

She loved Dorothy for reasons of her own, and had longed to know what had so blighted her young life, and now she had the opportunity of learning all.

There was a rustling of feet heard suddenly, and a rustling of leaves, the shrubs were hastily pushed aside, and Mrs. Lister stood before them with an agitated face.

"Don't send him from you, Miss Dorothy," she cried; "I have heard all you have said."

They started at the unexpected intrusion, and looked with bewilderment at the intruder, while a shadow of anger clouded the Baronet's brow.

"You should not have listened to our conversation, Mrs. Lister," said Dorothy, gravely.

"We are not ashamed of what we have said or done, but private conversations are not intended for other ears."

"I know it, my dear young lady," returned the nurse, growing very red in the face; "and if I had not loved you I should not have listened."

"That is strange logic!" said Sir Edmund, the frown relaxing.

"It is the truth, sir. I have long felt that Miss Dorothy had a secret trouble, but it was no place of mine to ask for her confidence, nor would she have given it to me if I had; but when I heard her telling you that she still loved you, and that she could never marry you because Miss Elise (Mrs. Radcliffe, I beg her pardon), was her sister, I can be silent no longer if I am hanged for it, for Miss Elise is no relation of Miss Dorothy's whatever."

Both the hearers of this unexpected news looked blankly in each others' faces, and in the face of Mrs. Lister—blankly and disbelievingly.

"No, my dear!" continued the old woman; "you are neither kith nor kin to Miss Elise, nor are you, as you are supposed to be, the

child of Mr. and Mrs. Dunraven. You are not related to either of them."

"Do they know this?" asked Dorothy, with quivering lips.

"No! No one living knows it but myself. Sometimes I have thought I would tell you, miss—at others that the secret should die with me."

"This, then, is what you promised to tell me when you knew me better?"

"Yes! but I never could get up the courage?"

"Who am I, then? Do I belong to nobody?" asked the girl, with a sob in her voice.

The barrier was passed—the gate now needed no opening. Sir Edmund cleared it in one jump, and Dorothy was in his arms.

"You belong to me, darling!" he whispered, joyfully. "My name is yours whenever you will bear it."

"But I am an outcast—penniless."

"I have learnt a lesson, darling!" he continued, in a low tone. "Neither society nor wealth can bring happiness. Nothing can give it but the perfect union of two hearts into one. We will leave the outside world, Dora, and live a life of our own. We shall not need large means then. If a cottage will content you, love, it will content me."

"No! You are not nameless, Miss Dorothy; you bear a high one. Neither are you penniless. You have a little of your own, but you come of a sad story. Shall I tell it you?"

The girl's lips framed consent, but no words came from them. She was deeply moved.

"I was nurse for many years in the family of Lord Kinconrie," began Mrs. Lister, "and reared the children as they came and grew up, but the one I loved best of all was Archie—The Honourable Archibald Airley—his lordship's youngest son. We womenfolk always take somehow to the naughty boy of the family, and all of them put together never gave me one quarter of the trouble as did master Archie."

"Men don't share our feeling, and Archie was always in hot water with his father, who never liked the boy, from the fact, perhaps, that his mother died at his birth, which was no fault of his, poor innocent."

"Well! he grew up to manhood, and gave trouble still, although, poor lad, he had a thoroughly good heart. He went to college, and when he returned he seemed to have something on his mind, and I couldn't understand what ailed him, for although all his bright old way was gone, there was a look of deeper happiness in his eyes than formerly, and he seemed to be doing his best to make his father think better of him."

"One sad day, not long after his return home, he was out shooting with his brothers, and an accident occurred which cost him his life."

"He knew his hours were numbered the moment he saw the doctor's face, and sent for his lordship."

"Perhaps he had forgotten my presence in the room; perhaps he wanted me to know too; but when Lord Kinconrie came to him he told him that he was going to die, asked him to forgive him any trouble he had given him, and confessed to him that he had privately married a young girl twelve months before, whom he begged his father to receive as a daughter; but his lordship was not a forgiving nature, and he totally refused, parting from his son in anger."

"Possibly he did not believe him to be so seriously ill, but Master Archie died that night; not, however, until he had told me all about his young wife, and given me her address, and had made me promise her the place in my heart, which had ever been his."

"When he was gone, I left Lord Kinconrie's service, and went to seek Mrs. Archibald."

"The Honourable Mrs. Archibald Airley she was, my dear, and I found her Cot."

"Wee Cot!" exclaimed Dorothy.

"Yes! my dear. Master Archie had had a legacy left him by an aunt, and he had bought

the land, and built the cot as a 'nest for his bird,' as he said himself, poor dear, and he only left her to go and try to reconcile his father to his marriage, for his young wife's sake.

"She never held up her head again when she heard that she had lost him. She didn't seem to have any income to live on, so I set things going out of my savings, and went into the town to seek for employment as a monthly nurse.

"The doctor soon recommended me, and I had one engagement, and saw my lady about again, and then I went to Wee Cot to look after Master Archie's young widow; and finding her very ill I stopped with her till you were born, my dear, soon after which death released the poor broken-hearted lady from her sorrows and sufferings.

"When you were but a few hours old the doctor sent for me. A lady travelling through the town had been taken prematurely ill, and he wanted me to go to her at once.

"I complied with his request, taking you, my dear, into the town with me, wrapped in a soft, warm shawl, and I took the little maid, who had waited on Mrs. Archibald, to look after you.

"I had engaged a room in the town as a home for myself when not out nursing, and it was close to the house where the lady, to whom I was called, was staying.

"That lady, Miss Dorothy, was Mrs. Dunraven, and she had a little girl born alive.

"The mother had fallen into a heavy sleep, and I was sitting with the baby in my arms, and seemingly quite quiet and well, when all at once it gave a strange sort of back breath, and died right off.

"I got away quickly into the next room and tried every restorative, but all in vain; then I returned and looked upon the sleeping woman's face, and thought how bitter an awakening hers would be—for she had made a rare fuss over the babe, I can tell you.

"And I had heard how she and her husband had been married many years, and how disappointed they had been at having no child, till this little one came to cheer them; for they had no near relations, and didn't like their great wealth to go to strangers.

"Then suddenly the thought came to me, How friendless your life would be, Miss Dorothy, with only your father's poor old nurse to care for you, and how good it would be for you to take the place of the dead little one, and quick as the thought I acted.

"Mrs Dunraven slept tranquilly. I slipped down the stairs with the dead child in my arms, wrapped up in a fur cloak. I opened my door with a latchkey and looked into my room.

"The little maid was fast asleep with you by her side. It was but the work of a minute to change the one infant for the other; in five more both you and I were quietly ensconced in the easy chair by Mrs. Dunraven's bedside, and when she aroused I put you into her arms.

"She awoke feverish and poorly, and took no especial heed to your looks. Once only she remarked that she had thought your hair was fairer, that was all; and so she took to you as if you had been her own, and has believed you to be so ever since.

"I acted for the best, Miss Dorothy, even if I did wrong, and you can tell her or not, as you please."

"Yes, she must know the truth," replied the girl, gently. "Mrs. Lister, who was my mother?"

"I never knew, my dear! She was a lady by birth, that anyone could see; but I don't think she had any relations, or Master Archie would have told me. In appearance you have but to look in the glass, and you will see her again."

"Poor mother! how she must have suffered! Did you know her Christian name, nurse?"

"Yes, my dear, and you have it. I for ever kept on saying what a beautiful name Dorothy

was, till Mrs. Dunraven took to it, and called you by it, which I was glad of."

"And I am glad, too!"

"And now, my dear, I have told you all; and if you still think you must send your gentleman away, you know best;" and Mrs. Lister, who, by-the-by, had taken brevet rank with monthly nursing, went, as she had come, through the bushes, out of sight.

"Must I go, never to return, Dora?" asked Sir Edmund, with a smile about his lips.

"No; I belong to no one now—but—"

"Me!"

"Yes; no one but you! It seems so strange to have all home ties cut thus suddenly away!" He placed his arm around her.

"Dora, I will try and replace them all—try and atone for all I have done against you!"

"It is all atoned for," she answered, with a bright look. "You would have taken me had I been no one's child—nameless, friendless, and penniless!"

"What of that?"

"I knew then you really loved me—and I am ready, when you will, to become your wife."

"And now I know that my sin is forgiven!" he said, clasping her to his breast. "I will go and prepare a little home for you, my heart's darling!"

"Edmund, let us live at 'Wee Cot.' My father built it, my mother lived and died there! It is my own, and it is a lovely spot!"

"So we will, darling; all shall be as you wish!"

"Do you think Mr. and Mrs. Dunraven will be very angry, Edmund?"

"I cannot tell! Mr. Dunraven has been rather rough on me; but perhaps not rougher than I deserved!"

"He is very much changed, and softened now. I think he will forgive us! I should be sorry to annoy him, for he has always been very kind to me, although instinct told him to love Elise better—and now good-bye, dear love! Give me your address, that I may write to you. I shall tell Mr. and Mrs. Dunraven the whole truth about everything to-day!"

"Then meet me here to-night, my own, and tell me what they say! I cannot sleep till all is settled!"

"As you will! Then at eight o'clock I will be here!"

A month after there was a quiet wedding at one of the London churches, and Mr. Dunraven himself gave away the daughter who had never been his.

[THE END.]

THE BONNET.—In lieu of a bonnet, the dames of Malta pull a black faldetta over their shining tresses. The beauties of Genoa used to pin on a white veil with a dozen gold pins. How national a bonnet becomes! Under the directory it was coquettish and revolutionary. Where but in sunny France could the bonnet have been born, that spot where the fairest of females dress, live and have their being? The cottage bonnet presented in Faed's picture of the "Race Day," and Millais's early pictures, shades the sweet English face into dove-like decorum. Among the dark-eyed daughters of Spain the black mantilla and a yellow rose have done duty as a head-covering for centuries until now, when the mantilla has gone out excepting at bull-fights. To-day, in France, it bears an insidious notch in front, and a bow which speaks of communism. It is boldly, awfully, dangerously chic, most unbecoming to some faces; it has all the audacity of the nineteenth century. A Swiss girl ties a large black bow and considers it a sufficient headgear, as it is very becoming. She considers herself defended from the gaze of the sun and man, but they all now strive for the French bonnet which sober England used to convert into a coal-scuttle, as we see in pictures painted forty years ago.

## THE OLD BOATSWAIN'S ERROR.

—O—

THE ghostly-looking albatross, riding the sea with stately crest, stared at the ship, as she dashed through the cold waves on her course. Whole flocks of sea-crows frequently circled about our masts. Now and then, driven by adverse winds near the coast, we beheld thousands of seals, whose weird, unearthly howling blended with the roar of the surges on the rocks. We were approaching Cape Horn, and as we drew every day nearer that dreaded locality, the young green hands amongst the crew began to show symptoms of what the old sailors facetiously termed the Cape Horn fever. One after another of these youngsters took to his bunk, shivering as if with an attack of ague, and remained rolled up in blankets until the first officer dosed them all with salts, and then, insisting that they were cured, forced them to return to duty.

As second officer of the *Cumberland*—such was the ship's name—it was often my place to see that the complainants did not shrink the tasks imposed upon them. My nautical experience having convinced me that the disease of Cape Horn fever was often merely imaginary, I used every effort to impress this truth upon the minds of the young sailors. As I treated them kindly, all except one seemed disposed to give up the foolish notion that they were too ill to brave the chilling cold and the tempestuous winds of the bluff old Cape. The exception I mention was a slender youth of sixteen—the son of Tom Saunders, our boatswain, who numbered sixty winters, and who was a perfect sea-dog, willing and ready to perform his duty on all occasions. Poor Tom, however, had one weakness—an overweening fondness for his boy rendering him blind to one of the lad's most serious faults. I can imagine I see him now—that dreamy, thoughtful Will Saunders, so fond of reading and study, always, from sheer distaste for manual labour, placing himself at the tail of a rope when a sail was to be hauled down, in order that the men in front of him might lay out to furl it, and he have the luxury of being left behind on deck.

Whenever I spoke to his father on the subject the old boatswain's temper would seem to mount aloft to the very tip of his brain.

"Hark ye, sir," he said to me on one of these occasions, "he's got too many chips from my hulk in him to be a shirk, so if he hangs back at times it's because he knows that them that's had more experience than him can furl sail better. I tell you he'll make a commodore yet, for he was always a readin' of naval heroes and such like. Ay, ay, shiver me, if I didn't see a second Paul Jones in him once when he sung to me them beautiful lines:—

"Our gunner in 'fright to Paul Jones he came—  
'Our ship is a-sinkin', our shrouds are in flame.'  
Then Paul Jones he cried, in the height of his pride,  
'If we cannot do better, men, we'll sink along-side.'"

Will Saunders, insisting that he had the Cape Horn fever, sadly neglected his duties. The captain, a good-natured man, forbore treating him harshly, but insisted on his being kept on deck.

"If the boy says he is ill, he is," the boatswain remarked to me one day. "I asked the captain to let him go below, but he only shook his head, and commenced talkin' about that Indian shawl, which his wife had bought a longin' for ever since she saw me take it out of my donkey (chest), and hang it up for an airin'. I got that shawl, as you know, from a native, for five pounds of 'baccy. I've been thinking I'd save it for Will's wife, if he ever got spliced, but now I've made up my mind to sell it to the captain for his wife, and p'raps that'll influence her to speak a good word for my boy, and persuade the skipper to let him stay below while he's ill."



I walked away shrugging my shoulders, for I knew that Will was not sick, but only pretending to be so.

That very day old Tom sold the Indian shawl to the captain while his wife and he were on deck, and it would have done you good to see how the eyes of the pretty woman sparkled as she held up the garment in all sorts of positions, and then alternately put it on and off her beautiful shoulders, and, lastly, laid it on one knee, and commenced to smooth it as if it was a pet kitten. It was really a magnificent article, of fine and glossy fabric, strong, closely woven, as soft as silk, and well fitting the shapely woman to whom it now belonged.

After the pleased captain had for awhile witnessed his fair partner's appreciation of his gift, he went below.

Then up steps old Tom Saunders to the skipper's wife, takes off his Scotch cap, bows, scrapes his foot, rolls his quid of tobacco far back against his cheek, and says, respectfully,—

"Ma'am, here's hopin' that that ere shawl will remind you to try and persuade Captain Benson to let my boy, who is ill, stow himself in the fo'castle till he gets well."

Mrs. Benson looked at the speaker rather coldly. Her large, dark, almond-shaped eyes seemed to go through him like needles. He drew back abashed, and began to pull at his grey forelock. Then, as if inspired by a sudden thought, he continued,—

"Tell you what I'll do, ma'am. I'll give the captain back half the money he paid me for the shawl if you'll persuade him to let the lad stay below, and many thanks to you, ma'am."

Mrs. Benson looked indignant at what she deemed an attempt to bribe her, but the eager, wistful expression of Tom's weather-beaten visage soon convinced her that the proposal was the result of the almost childish simplicity of his nature.

She gently declined his offer; said that the captain had told her that the boy was not sick at all; and she added that her husband required no persuasion to perform his duty, but always did what was right; whereupon the old tar, deeply grieved for his son's sake, bowed and withdrew.

Two days later we were off Cape Horn. The dark, leaden-coloured sky, and the cold headwinds did not keep Mrs. Benson below. She was on deck in all weathers, wearing her warm Indian shawl, and now and then glancing at the dim reflection of her superb form in the cabin window.

"Ay!" muttered old Tom to himself, on one of these occasions, "I s'pose as it's the way with 'em all, and it may be wrong of me, but I heartily wish I hadn't sold the captain that shawl for her, since she won't speak a good word for my boy. Avast there, though; I mustn't growl about it. It ain't her fault that she's jest as she's made—jest fit to wear Indian shawls, and admire herself in 'em, without a thought of a poor lad who is ill."

Just then one of those sudden squalls common to this fickle clime came howling and thundering down upon the ship.

The sea roared like an old lion, and the wind blew great guns. For an instant the craft lay nearly on her beam-ends, while orders to clew up and furl rang fore and aft.

As the men went aloft the force of the gale blew them almost flat against the shrouds.

"Lively, lads!" shouted Captain Benson through his trumpet.

With a report like a cannon, the fore-top-sail, torn from the yards, collapsed, and went spinning upward into the rack of the squall.

There was a sort of "cross sea"—one of the most perilous peculiarities of the Cape Horn waters—and now and then the low-hulled ship, with a heavy lurch, would plunge bows under, and lie for moments as if she would never get up, leaving the slatting canvas completely at the mercy of the winds.

Fearing that the jibs would be blown from

the boom, the captain was in a hurry to have them furl.

"Here, you, Will Saunders, where are you?" he roared, as the boy sprang for the lee of the galley. "Away you go, and help furl the jib. Don't you see there is only one man out there?"

"I'm ill, sir," cried Will.

The captain smiled grimly, for the nimbleness shown by the lad in getting behind the galley indicated his perfect fitness for duty.

"Come, away you go!" was the sternly reiterated order, and the boy sulkily obeyed.

The man out on the boom before him was a Lascar—a lithe, supple, eel-like fellow—of wonderful activity. He had run out on the foot-rope like a flash, thus avoiding being dipped under water during the ship's plunges, and by dodging the slatting canvas had escaped being knocked overboard.

Will Saunders might have done the same, but shrinkingly he felt his way like a cripple; and the captain, who now foresaw what must happen, was about to call him back, when a tremendous plunge of the ship buried the lad under water. Far upward the bow swung again, showing the boy high in the air, gasping for breath, as with trembling fingers he clung to the boom.

Frightened by his cold bath, by the suffocating spray flying around him, by the wind, screaming like a fiend of doom in his ears, and still more by the canvas now bellying out from the spar against his face, and almost pushing him off, he gave a wild cry of terror.

His father, who was aloft on the foreyard, heard and saw him. He had just finished superintending the furling of the foresail, and now, in spite of his years, the old tar, seizing the forestay, slid down like lightning towards his beloved boy.

But scarce had his feet touched the staysail boom when he heard the second despairing cry of Will, as a violent slat of the canvas knocked the lad from the yard.

The old boatswain bounded like a lion to the deck.

"Quick, for Heaven's sake!" he roared to the captain and me.

We had been standing amidships, and we now saw Will Saunders, who had fallen clear of the bows to windward, come up under the counter, near the mizen chains. The ship had just made another of her plunges, remaining, for a few seconds, without headway, in the cross-sea, and this had enabled the boy to hold on to a thin piece of clothes-line, dangling from the chains, and merely wound about one of them without being fastened to it. As a consequence, the thin rope was slipping off the iron bar as the lad held to it; and as the craft was again about to go spinning on her way, we felt sure that the youth would be left astern, with the line in his hands, and would be lost, for it was too rough to lower a boat.

We rushed "aftward," but we knew we would not be in time to save the boy, especially as all the ropes were now entangled, and in confusion.

The captain's wife, in spite of the peril she incurred from the seas sweeping over the rail, had sprung from the shelter of the companion way when she heard Will Saunders fall; and now, as the ship swung off, and the wind was brought astern, we saw the brave woman, with a movement as quick as thought, take off her Indian shawl, and dropping the lower part overboard, tie the other end to the mizen shrouds.

Just then, a rush of water sweeping the deck compelled her to cling to the shrouds to escape being washed into the sea, but, the next moment, the voice of the noble woman rang clearly above the roar of the wind, which had slightly abated.

"He holds to it! Quick, and he can be saved!"

Active as we were, old Tom, in spite of his age, somehow got ahead of us, and, swinging himself over the side into the chains, his iron hand gripped the boy's collar.

From the shawl, to which he had clung,

Will was lifted to the deck; and now it seemed as if the grateful old tar would never tire of thanking Mrs. Benson for saving his son, nor stop asking her pardon.

"Pardon for what?" she inquired.

"Why, do you see," replied Tom, "when you didn't speak a good word for my sick boy, I was sorry I sold that shawl to the captain for you; and I made up my mind as you was good for nothin' except wearin' Indian shawls and the like, and admirin' yourself in them. Now I ask pardon for the mistake I made. You've proved yourself a heron (heroine), ma'am; you've done my boy and me the greatest kindness, and I'm glad enough I let the skipper have the shawl for you."

"Yes, father," cried Will; "for that shawl was the means of saving my life; and let me now own that Mrs. Benson was right about my not being ill, for I was not ill at all."

The affair served as a sort of lesson to the boy. The pluck and coolness shown by the woman who had saved his life made him ashamed of his lack of hardihood, and from that moment he emulated his father in performing his duty on every occasion.

Eventually he commanded a fine ship, and he is now prospering in the East Indies trade.

R. H.

**DIFFICULTY** is a severe instructor, set over us by the supreme ordinance of a parental guardian and legislator, who knows us better than we know ourselves, and he loves us better too. He that wrestles with us strengthens our nerves, and sharpens our skill. Our antagonist is our helper. This amiable conflict with difficulty obliges us to an intimate acquaintance with our object, and compels us to consider it in all its relations. It will not suffer us to be superficial.

**DRESS HINTS.**—One of the least trying combinations for woman's dress is oak and green, which can be worn by the very pretty and by the very ugly. In many fashionable costumes there is a decided contrast between the colours of the draperies and the underskirts, and the result is effects which are picturesque and agreeable. Of course, a woman with no taste will make a greater fright of herself when allowed a choice of colours than she will when compelled to dress in one hue, and, equally of course, a short woman or a fat woman has no right to insult her fellow-beings by dividing herself into sections of sharply contrasting tints; but a tall, slender girl, or even a woman of medium size, is sure to look pretty this season, and the streets will look gay enough to deprive the artists of all excuse for going to the beaches for colour.

**A MOCK AUCTION.**—By introducing a mock auction, a hostess can provide an evening's pleasant entertainment for her guests. It must be understood that no money is called for, the hostess providing each guest from fifty to one hundred white beans, which are supposed to represent a sovereign, and all the bidding is done with them. It will be necessary to provide beforehand the articles to be sold, which should each be wrapped in paper, or so disguised that no one may know what he is bidding for. The auction is much more interesting and the bidding more spirited if each package is found to contain some little thing of trifling value, although some should be of an amusing character. We attended one a short time ago, where the daughter of our hostess was quite an artist; a number of the parcels were found to contain trifling sketches made by her. So the bidding became quite exciting, each one hoping to get some specimen of her handiwork. A sign might be displayed in some prominent place, saying: "No mutilated beans received." As everybody generally gets some little souvenir, all are satisfied and usually well pleased with their evening's amusement.

## FABLES.

Isn't it queer that contractors should be engaged to widen streets?

A good way to find a woman out—Call when she isn't at home.

Are crow-bars and raven locks of the same family?

The reporter is the philanthropic friend of the wrong-doer. Whenever he finds such a one he does all he can to write him up.

CHIEF.—"What do you propose to take for your cold?" said a lady to a sneezing gentleman, who responded: "Oh, I'll sell it very cheap. I won't higgie about the price at all."

AN OLD MAN'S CONUNDRUM.—To what was the wisdom of Solomon due? It was due to the fact that he had seven hundred wives, whom he consulted on all occasions.

A NEW SOCIETY.—The last society spoken of in town is the "Pay-Nothing." It is said to be alarmingly prosperous. The password is "Lead us a bob;" the response, "Broke."

PUTTING FOOT IN ITALY.—A distinguished lawyer was lately explaining to his son, who was quite a boy, the outlines of Italy, and remarked, as usual, that they resembled in form a man's foot. "Well," said the little fellow, "if I live to be a man I'll put my foot in it!"

SOCIAL SURGERY.—A physician has invented a knife that cuts so fast that nobody can feel it. After all, however, there is nothing vastly new in this surgical invention. People in society cut each other every day, and if they are at all fast neither of them feels it.

THE PLAGUE OF THE WARDROBE.—"Moths!" exclaimed an old lady—conning over a string of advertisements relative to a book about those insects—"and where to find them. Where, indeed! As if there wanted a book written to tell us that—drat the good-for-nothing destructive, mischievous things!"

BREVITY, long celebrated as the soul of wit, has become, in modern times, the first principle of correspondence in matters of business. An instance occurred recently when a creditor sent an account against a doubtful debtor to an agent for collection, with the instructions: "Take the straightest road to the money."

WINE AS A GOOSE.—A gentleman asked a shepherd "whether that river might be passed over or not." "Yes," said the shepherd; but soon trying the gentleman founced over head and ears. "Why, you rogue," said he, "did you not tell me it might be passed over?" "Indeed, sir," said the shepherd, "I thought so, for my geese go over and back again every day, and I did not doubt but that you were as wise as a goose."

OUT OF HIS COURSE.—A steamboat captain was feeling his way in the dark, when the look-out ahead cried out: "Schooner without a light." It was a narrow escape; and as the steamer passed the schooner the captain demanded: "What are you doing with your schooner here in the dark without a light?" To his dismay, the skipper, who was a Frenchman, answered: "Vat za diable you do here viz your ole steamboat in three feet of water, eh?" and just then the steamer landed high and dry on a sand bank.

"PLEASE your lordship's honour and glory," said Tom Ryan, who had been arraigned for poaching, "I shot the hare by accident." "By accident?" remarked the prosecuting attorney. "I was firing at a bush, and the baste ran across my aim, all of his own accord." "The gamekeeper tells a different story," replied his lordship, the judge. "Och! don't put faith in what that man says," said Tim, "when he never cares about speakin' the truth anyhow. He told me 'other day your lordship was not so fit to fill the seat of justice as a jackass!" "Ay, ay," exclaimed the judge, "indeed! and what did you say?" "Praise your lordship, I said your lordship was."

A FAMILY found their canary in a pet the other day. The pet was the cat.

WHY should oil countries be surrounded by water? Because they are islands.

ST. GEORGE was a great entomologist. He even made the dragon fly.

LIGHT of the government department—Red Tapers.

"ONE bumper at parting," as the drunkard said when he ran against the post.

A NOTED rifle shot recently hit over 50,000 glass balls in a 60,000 glass ball shoot. The question "What's in an aim?" seems to be thus fully answered.

A GIRL, discussing an absent friend, named Amanda, exclaimed: "What a pretty girl Amanda is." "Ah!" said the lady, "is she blonde or brunette?" "Oh, she has her days of both," answered the admiring friend.

KEEN PENETRATION.—"You don't love me—I know you don't," said a young married lady to her husband. "I give you credit, my dear, for a keen penetration," was his consoling reply.

RESTOR COURTESY.—A judge, joking a young lawyer, said: "If you and I were to be turned into a horse or an ass, which would you prefer to be?" "The ass to be sure," replied the lawyer. "I've heard of an ass being made a judge, but a horse—never."

"DID any man ever get anything by opposing a woman's will?" exclaimed a formented husband. "Yes, I have made a good deal by that sort of thing," answered his brother Richard. "But, Dick," responded the other, "you're a lawyer, and the woman whose will you opposed was always dead."

MISINTERPRETED QUOTATIONS.—"Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown." A head would be very uncomfortable without one. "Oh, that's too, too solid flesh would melt, thaw," &c. It is very evident that when Hamlet made this remark he hadn't spent a summer in India. "Always speak well of the dead." Some people will make coarse remarks.

A YOUNG man from the country went into the office of an illustrated paper the other day and applied for a situation. "Can you draw well?" asked the publisher. The young man seemed to be confused, but finally rallied, and said: "No; but if you'll show me the well, I'll draw the water fast enough!" Then the publisher seemed to be confused.

A GENTLEMAN travelling in California, encountered a panther, of which he subsequently wrote as follows: "I looked at him long enough to note his brown and glossy coat, his big, glaring eyes, his broad, well-developed muzzle, and his capacious jaws, when both of us left the spot, and I am pleased to add in opposite directions."

A REPORTER, in describing the return of a politician to his room, says: "Entering with the key in his hand, he shut the door and put it in his pocket." On this a paper remarks: "This assertion is certainly false, for he either did not shut the door, or else he did not put it in his pocket. After a campaign has closed there is no excuse for this sort of thing."

AN old lady, who was equally remarkable for kindness of heart and absence of mind, one day was accosted by a beggar, whose stout and healthy appearance started even her into momentary doubt of the needfulness of charity in this instance. "Why," exclaimed the good old lady, "you look well able to work." "Yes," replied the suppliant; "but I have been deaf and dumb these seven years." "Poor man! what a heavy affliction!" exclaimed the old lady, at the same time giving him relief with a liberal hand. On returning home she mentioned the fact, remarking: "What a dreadful thing it is to be deprived of such precious faculties!" "But how," asked her sister, "did you know that the poor man had been deaf and dumb for seven years?" "Why," was the quiet and unconscious answer, "he told me so himself!"

"EVERY day in the week has got to be Thursday with me," said an old toper.

A RING round the moon is said to be a sign of rain. And a ring round a girl's finger is also said to be a sign of reign.

WE have often heard of ships running into one another; but the other day we actually saw a house fly.

A CURIOUSLY furnished apartment—A bedroom with a towel-horse and a handsome cabinet.

WHAT TO PREACH ABOUT.—"What should I preach about?" asked a clergyman of Ralph Waldo Emerson, who gravely replied: "About a quarter of an hour."

CORONER (to rural witness): "Did the deceased die under suspicious circumstances?" Witness: "No. He died under the ice on Squire Brown's pond."

LOVER'S PRIVILEGE.—It is the privilege of the lover to be at one and the same time in two situations. When beside his sweetheart he is also beside himself.

THE LITTLE EVIL.—An old bachelor was asked why his brother married so little a wife. "Why," said he, "he thought that of all evils he should choose the least."

AN agricultural paper says that a good hog should weigh as many pounds as he is days old. This is a new way of getting at the age of a man who occupies two seats in a tram-car.

It is reported that the following dialogue occurred between the wife of a noted stock operator and her son, one morning recently: "Gustavus, have you watered the horse?" "Yes, mother." "And the flowers?" "Yes, mother." "Then my son, you may go down to the office and help your pa water his stocks!"

POSSESSION OR PURSUIT.—At a debating club the question was discussed: Whether there is more happiness in the possession or pursuit of an object? "Mr. President," said a young orator, "suppose I was courtin' a gal, and she was to run away, and I was to run after her, wouldn't I be happier when I cotched her than when I was running after her?" The young man gained the victory.

THE BETTER HALF.—It being agreed at a party of twelve, equally composed of ladies and gentlemen, that a disputed question should be settled by the opinion of the majority, the six ladies expressed themselves opposed to the six gentlemen, and claimed the victory. A gentleman objected to this, as the number of votes was equal, saying "they were half and half." "True," replied a witty fair one; "but we are the better halves."

A LAWYER who was defending a waltz for a widow, in the fervour of his zeal in his fair client's cause, exclaimed: "Gentlemen of the jury, a man who could be so mean as to use a helpless widow woman ought to be kicked to death by a jackass; and gentlemen"—here the eloquent counsel turned towards the judge—"I wish his honour would here and now appoint me to do the kicking!"

Mrs. GIBBONS.—"I think it's a shame I have to ride about in that old trap when Mrs. Spruadale is always getting something new in the way of a vehicle." Mr. G.—"Why, my love, she hasn't a new equipage has she?" Mrs. G.—"Of course she has. I heard her say at her party the other evening, that her husband had given her a *carte blanche*." Mr. G.—"It's one of those basket-phonies, I suppose."

An old lady was recently brought as a witness before a bench of magistrates, and when asked to take off her bonnet obstinately refused to do so, saying: "There's no law compelling a woman to take off her bonnet." "Oh," impatiently replied one of the magistrates, "you know the law, do you? Perhaps you would like to come up and sit here and teach me." "No, I thank you, sir," said the woman tartly; "there are old women enough there now."



## SOCIETY.

HER MAJESTY'S Edinburgh visit was a great success from beginning to end. The Queen seemed to be delighted with her reception, was in splendid health the whole time, and thoroughly enjoyed herself.

Princess Mary recently opened Babies' Castle, Dr. Barnardo's latest institution, at Hawkhurst, amid some display of religious fervour, handbell ringing, and almsgiving.

The procession of infants before the Princess and her family especially pleased Her Royal Highness, and with her own hand she laughingly helped many a tiny toddler to scramble into the porch. While inspecting the building, the Princess halted in the day apartment to pinch the fat cheeks of the wide-eyed babies and to kiss the especially attractive ones. Delighted with what she had seen, and the cup of tea and slice of mutton she had afterwards eaten for lunch, the Princess consented to become the President of the Institution.

Nor without reason, says a usually well-informed contemporary, Princess Christian is proud of her manly young son, Prince Christian Victor, and never fails to encourage his athletic leanings. In this way it came about that she gave a garden party at Cumberland Lodge the other day, that her friends might witness a cricket match between the Parsees and an eleven chosen by the Prince. The cricket Prince scored twenty-four on the occasion referred to, and his men were victorious.

Although the Emperor of China has taken unto himself three wives, it appears he is not yet man enough for his actions to go undirected, as we see the Empress, his mother, has succeeded to the prayers of numerous memorials, and will, after the Emperor assumes the administration of the Government next February, still continue to have a conspicuous position in the Council. Three wives and a kingdom are too much certainly for one lad to rule at one time.

At Henry VII.'s Chapel, Westminster Abbey, on the 10th ult., was celebrated the marriage of Mr. James Baillie-Hamilton, youngest son of the late Admiral William Alexander and Lady Harriet Baillie-Hamilton, with the Lady Evelyn Campbell, fourth daughter of the Duke of Argyll, K.G., K.T.

The bride's dress was of rich cream satin duchesse, very simply made with a long train; the petticoat was prettily draped in front with exquisite old Roman guipure and a large bunch of orange blossoms, the bodice being trimmed with lace and orange blossoms to match; she had a small spray of orange blossoms in her hair intermixed with real myrtle, and a tulle veil fastened with a diamond and sapphire pin (Earl Percy's gift), and a pearl and diamond pin, given her by Miss Denison; her ornaments comprised a beautiful five-row pearl necklace (an old family jewel) and a ruby and diamond brooch, the bridegroom's gifts; a pearl and coral bracelet, from the Duchess of Leinster, her aunt; a gold bracelet with star sapphire centre, surrounded with diamonds, from the Duke of Westminster; and a pearl bracelet, from Mrs. Hamilton King, sister of the bridegroom.

The bridesmaids' tasteful dresses were composed of cream satin mervilleux, the fronts of the skirts being of cream lace, with long pointed drapery of satin; and the bodices were fully trimmed with lace. The elder ladies wore small lace bonnets, with cream feathers; and the four children mob caps to match, brown stockings, and bronze shoes. The bridegroom presented each with a pearl and diamond pin-brooch, and all carried bouquets of pink and white flowers.

The Duchess of Argyll was attired in a handsome dress of grey Sicilienne, trimmed with satin, and a cream bonnet.

## STATISTICS.

It is estimated that in Paris eighty thousand women are away from their homes all day earning a livelihood. Their children or infants are usually confided to other women, called *gardeuses* or *sevruses* (keepers or weaners), who charge fourteen sous a day for the care of each child. Besides this mode of caring for children, over twenty-five thousand are put out to nurse in Paris alone.

Sir E. Rieu, M.P., owns no less than 2,000,000 acres in America; the Duke of Sutherland, 100,000; Lord Dunmore, 100,000; and Lord Dunraven, 60,000 acres. Messrs. Phillips, Marshall & Co. own a farm of 1,300,000 acres; the heirs of Colonel Murphy, 1,100,000 acres; H. Diston, 12,000,000 acres, and the Standard Oil Company, 1,000,000 acres. It appears that nine men own a territory equal to that of New Hampshire, Massachusetts and Rhode Island combined. Then there are the great railroad corporations, whose free gifts of land from lavish Congresses amount to upwards of 200,000,000 acres. Eleven of these corporations have received 120,000,000 acres. The Northern Pacific road had grants amounting to 47,000,000 acres, and other grants made ranged from 1,000,000 acres upward.

## GEMS.

Love is the true revealer of secrets, because it makes one with the object regarded.

In the want and ignorance of almost all things they looked up themselves as the happiest and wisest people of the universe.

In language the tongue is more pliant to all sound, in athletics the joints more supple to all feats of activity, in youth than afterwards.

There is in every true woman's heart a spark of heavenly fire, which beams and blazes in the dark hour of adversity.

The advantage to be derived from virtue is so evident that the wicked practice it from interested motives.

As love without esteem is volatile and capricious, esteem without love is languid and cold.

Few men can do a favour without making the recipient feel it in some way or other that will detract from the value of the benefit conferred.

## HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

POTATO SOUP.—With a small piece of salt pork boil six peeled potatoes; strain, and add to it milk, butter, and salt till of the consistency of cream; add some finely-chopped parsley, and boil all five minutes; cut some stale bread into dice, fry brown in hot lard, and throw into the soup just before serving.

TOMATO SOUP WITHOUT MEAT.—One quart of stewed tomatoes, one quart of new milk, one rolled biscuit, one teaspoonful of soda, a small bit of butter, and a little salt. When tomatoes are sufficiently cooked add the soda, then the biscuit, butter, and salt. Heat the milk in a saucepan, and pour into the kettle, and as soon as it boils remove it from the fire and serve it at once.

MACARONI AND TOMATO.—If you wish to prepare a quart dish for your table, fill your dish about a third full of macaroni; put it in a saucepan, and cover with plenty of boiling water to allow for swelling, and boil twenty minutes to half-an-hour; it must be soft, but quite whole; drain off all the water; stir in a piece of butter the size of a small egg and a small cup of grated cheese, and place in your dish; strain over it a quart of well-stewed tomatoes while hot, and bake half-an-hour, or until brown; salt and season tomatoes to taste before adding to macaroni.

## MISCELLANEOUS.

EVERY failure is a step to success; every detection of what is false directs us towards what is true; every trial exhausts some tempting form of error. Not only so, but scarcely any attempt is entirely a failure; scarcely any theory, the result of steady thought, is altogether false; no tempting form of error is without some latent charm derived from truth.

If we are to act rightly we must know what right is, and to this end the mind must be informed, the judgment exercised, the reason strengthened, the intellect cultivated. Every battle against ignorance, every effort to expound the laws of our being, and to show how the truest happiness and the highest duty are always consonant, is a direct help to the cause of right-doing.

There is much that is and must be done for pay, and it is right that it should be so; but there is also much that can be best accomplished without any thought of pay—even the pay of love—but simply from the desire of doing good. If each one will devote some regular portion of his leisure to such of this work as is most congenial to his taste and nearest to his heart, striving to understand its principles and to employ wise methods with system and order, success will crown his efforts, his own character will develop harmoniously, and the welfare of the community will be furthered in the most speedy and effective manner.

THE GUIDES AT POMPEII.—The guides through Pompeii, in the season of the rush to Naples, eat nothing between nine o'clock in the morning and sunset, that is, from the opening to the closing, because they have no time to cease constantly walking and briskly talking. They are of the governmental corps, which is distributed at all the noted archaeological points of Italy, Pompeii being the chief. They are usually married, have small pay, are intelligent, courteous and unshirring, and they are prohibited from taking, on danger of dismissal, the smallest solid compliment of appreciation. The tourist's only method, and most worthy of all the inevitable prodigalities, is to buy some of their photographs, whether they are the best or not.

A PET ECONOMY.—Women are not apt to be thoroughly extravagant, but generally have some pet economy. With some the instinct is directed towards the saving of pins; others like to hoard brown paper and pieces of twine. Many tremble at the idea of any waste in coal or light; the furnace fire is kept at a minimum, and the gas is turned off on the smallest pretext. Some believe that thrift consists in spending no money except as necessity demands, while others regard any make shift, and living from hand to mouth, as the worst extravagance, and consider that real economy lies in having plenty of everything and using it with care. Contriving a meal out of nothing is the source of satisfaction to many housekeepers, while others deny the possibility of such miracles.

There is no evil that we cannot either face or flee from, but the consciousness of duty disregarded. A sense of duty pursues us ever. It is omnipresent, like Deity. If we take to ourselves the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost part of the sea, duty performed, or duty violated, is still with us, for our happiness or our misery. If we say that darkness shall cover us, in the darkness, as in the light, our obligations are yet with us. We cannot escape their power, nor fly from their presence. They are with us in this life, will be with us at its close, and, in that sense of inconceivable solemnity which lies still further onward, we shall still find ourselves surrounded by the consciousness of duty to pain us, wherever it has been violated, and to console us so far as God has given us grace to perform it.

## NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

L. N.—The 1st of May, 1872, fell on a Wednesday.  
J. P. MORRIS.—The sum named was never imposed.  
E. B. D.—Each regular soldier costs per year in Prussia £33; in France £37; and in England £100.

E. J. H.—Napoleon Bonaparte landed at St. Helena on October 16, 1815.

W. T.—1. The hair enclosed is flaxen. 2. Your handwriting is suitable for business purposes.

ALFRED.—We do not insert matrimonial advertisements.

BELEIDA.—The ordinary juice of the lemon diluted with a fourth of its quantity of pure water and applied with a sponge.

MAOON.—Kindly say whether the cloak is a macintosh or waterproofed cloth or cashmere, and we shall perhaps be able to help you.

Q. P. T.—To take stains of wine out of linen, put the articles in milk that is boiling on the fire. The blemishes will soon disappear.

E. H. J.—If the lady was a new acquaintance, and invited you to call, without mentioning the probability of being able to receive you, it was equivalent to no invitation at all, and you need not hazard a call.

CHERY G.—Wyandotté Cave is a great natural curiosity in Indiana, United States. It is 22 miles in extent, with a maximum width of 300 feet and a height of 245 feet. It is thought to surpass in many particulars the famous Mammoth Cave in Kentucky.

EMIE.—The strait which connects San Francisco Bay with the Pacific Ocean has been termed, not inappropriately, the Golden Gate, as it is the passage through which multitudes in former years hastened to gather the gold to be found in California.

G. G. M.—On September 9, 1609, Henry Hudson, in the employ of the Dutch East India Company, discovered the Bay of New York, and three days later entered the river which bears his name. The land discovered by Hudson was claimed by Holland and named New Netherlands. In 1614 the first Dutch settlements were made on Manhattan Island.

C. S. A.—Spinach, the leaves of which are boiled and eaten as a vegetable, is supposed to have first grown in Western Asia and to have been brought by the Arabs into Spain, whence it was carried into other parts of Europe. The word spinach is from the Latin *spinacia*, a thorn, the plant being named, as some think, on account of its prickly leaves; but others think it is from *Hispania*, the ancient name of Spain.

H. F. S.—If the young man has no prospect of being able to marry, he is acting very ungenerously in taking up your time and interest. It is far better in him to leave you heart-whole and free to accept a better equipped suitor. Your parents should assist you. No young lady should allow herself to be drawn into a love which may not end in marriage. A pair of slippers or sleeve-buttons make a nice present. The hair enclosed is auburn.

H. M. C.—A fine liquid blacking is made as follows: Ivory black and treacle of each one pound; sweet oil and oil of vitriol, of each a quarter of a pound. Mix the three first-named until the oil is perfectly killed, then add the vitriol diluted with half its weight of water. Mix again well, and let stand for three hours, when it may be reduced to a proper consistency with water. An excellent paste blacking is thus made: Treacle, one pound; ivory black, one and a quarter pounds; sweet oil, two ounces. Mix well, as directed for the liquid blacking, and add a little strong vinegar.

R. C. D.—Among the ancient nations prisoners of war, when spared by the sword, were usually enslaved, and this custom more or less continued until about the thirteenth century, when civilised nations, instead of enslaving, commonly exchanged their prisoners. The Spanish, French, and American prisoners of war in England on September 30th, 1779, were 12,000 in number. In September, 1793, the English prisoners in France were estimated at 6,000, and the French in England 27,000. In 1811 the English prisoners in France amounted to 10,900, and the French, &c., in England, 47,000.

MYRIE.—To mend crockery ware, use lime and the white of an egg. Take a sufficient quantity of the egg to mend one article at a time. Shave off a small quantity of lime, and mix thoroughly. Apply quickly to the edges, when the cement will very soon become set and strong. Mix but a little at a time, as it hardens very soon, rendering it unfit for use. One or two experiments will teach you about the right quantities to employ. Ornaments of alabaster or plaster may be joined together with the same cement, or by a mixture of newly baked and finely pulverised plaster of Paris, mixed up with the least possible quantity of water.

L. F. F.—Buocaneros or freebooters were quite numerous in the seventeenth century. Their stronghold was formed about 1630 at the island of Tortuga, where after driving out the Spaniards they erected fortifications. They lay in wait for vessels passing from America to Europe, the Spanish galleons in particular attracting their attention, as they were sometimes very richly laden. The French buocaneros established themselves in Santo Domingo, and the English in Jamaica. Among those who made themselves conspicuous were Montbar, François L'Olonnais, Miguel de Vasco, Henry Morgan, Van Horn, Grammont, and Pointis.

SAILOR JACK.—Inform the Admiralty, and open the account in your own name.

E. E. S.—Purl, in knitting, means an inversion of stitches, which gives to the work a ribbed or wavel appearance.

L. M. K.—Glycerine diluted with pure Cologne water will generally help to remove blackheads, and glycerine diluted with a solution of borax and water will often remove freckles.

JESSIE.—1. The 1st April, 1860, fell on a Thursday. 2. The hair is a pretty shade of gold. The owner would be a blonde. 3. Handwriting good, but rather masculine.

EVERARD.—It is exceedingly unwise and improper for a lady to enter into correspondence under the circumstances which you describe, and some persons think that it is also disreputable.

E. P. S.—A little cold cream rubbed on every night improves and softens some skins. Be careful to avoid exposure to the wind, take exercise and plenty of sleep, and do not use any preparation for the skin except under good medical advice.

EMILY H.—1. Tied with blue auburn; tied with red bright brown; tied with green fawn colour. It is a matter of taste, but of the three personally we prefer the bright brown. 2. Handwriting good. 3. Use a back-board and the dumb-bell exercise for an hour every morning.

## MY HUSBAND AND I.

WHEN we were married, my husband and I,  
We married for love; we were very poor.  
"Love flies from the window when Poverty  
Comes stalking in at the door."  
So the people said. "It is folly. Take care;  
You'd better not marry so soon—beware!"

We laughed at their warning, my husband and I,  
We went to the minister and were wed:  
As happy a couple as ever lived,  
Though we were so poor. They said:  
"Love never will make the kettle boil,  
Nor fill it with meat, nor the lamp with oil."

We loved each other, my husband and I;  
We were young and strong, and our hearts were light;  
We looked to the future without a fear,  
And worked in the present with all our might;  
We made us a home, as we hoped for the best—  
A wee little house like a brown bird's nest.

We were so happy, my husband and I,  
The furniture he made all at night,  
And I the carpets and curtains and spreads,  
And our home was always neat and bright.  
We planted roses and vines by the door,  
And they wreathed the cottage o'er and o'er.

We had hard fortune, my husband and I,  
A little one came and the crops were poor;  
And very often that winter we saw  
Grim Poverty stalking in at the door.  
But Love never offered to fly away  
From the home he made on our wedding day.

We never lost courage, my husband and I;  
And fortune changed for us in the spring.  
We have a good home and children and friends  
Enough and to spare of everything.  
And we know true love will not leave our home  
No matter what trouble or loss may come.

A. K.

EMIE.—On the whole, it is always best for a girl situated as you are with regard to this matter to keep as clear of it as possible. It is natural for you to be solicitous for your schoolfellow's welfare, but as she only laughs at your friendly expostulations, it is not likely that you can do anything to influence her. Were you to become an informer, by exposing her to her teachers or parents, you would probably incur her hatred, and if any serious trouble should afterwards grow out of the affair, a greater part of the blame would be apt to be laid to your charge.

W. W. R.—To gain the love of a young man who appears to think so little of you is a difficult and at the same time a most delicate undertaking. The gentle sex should never thrust themselves on gentlemen, as by so doing they injure themselves greatly in the mind of the latter. Men do not care to win a prize so easily, preferring rather to pursue than to be pursued. Treat the gentleman with the utmost politeness at all times, showing him those delicate attentions of which woman is the mistress, and it may be that before long he will become a suitor to your hand.

A. B. C.—The earliest matches of which there is any record were thin strips of wood about six inches long, and tipped with brimstone and sulphur. These were used in connection with the old tinder-box, one end being applied to the smouldering tapers, into which a spark had been struck with flint and steel. The first friction matches, or lucifers, were invented by a chemist named Walker, of Stockton-on-Tees, in 1829. They were tipped with a paste composed of chlorate of potash, sulphate of sodium and starch, and were ignited by being drawn between folds of wet paper. For convenience in carrying, they were made in the shape of a comb.

M. H.—In passing through a door, a lady, even if she is the hostess, always precedes a gentleman.

E. H. J.—To remove the marks of perspiration in clothing, first use a strong solution of soda, and then rinse thoroughly with clean water.

LEDA.—When you are requested to call upon strangers, politeness should inspire you to do so without delay.

H. B.—You may not desire an intimate acquaintance, and if so, you need not invite them to dinner or tea; it is not absolutely essential, but it is considered an act of hospitality and good will.

M. L.—Plated ware may be cleaned by making a paste with whiting and alcohol, applying it the plated articles, and after it has dried rubbing it off with a brush (if rough), or a soft rag, if smooth.

O. T.—It is not improper for a lady, after frequently meeting a gentleman, to ask him to call upon her; but usually he asks her permission or is brought by a mutual friend.

E. T. T.—You had better wait until you are introduced and better acquainted before recognising the young gentleman. H. will be older by-and-by and less bashful, and then you will also be more discreet.

C. S. S.—The nations that Paraguay was at war with from 1865 to 1870 were Brazil, the Argentine Republic, and Uruguay. Lopez, who was the Dictator of Paraguay, provoked the war, which was ended by his death in battle, March 1, 1870.

A. H. S.—As you already have the affix junior to your name, unless your son of the same name is grown up, and there is likely to be mistakes arising from a confusion of identity, it will be as well to use no affix to his name.

E. H. B.—Previous to investing your funds in real estate, you should not only examine the property itself, but the surroundings, with a view of ascertaining whether the property is likely to advance in value. Take some disinterested party with you, and do not depend to any extent on the statements of estate agents.

L. M. M.—A card when you are not at home is the same as a personal visit, and it is your duty to return it. The neglect of this would be a great solecism, and your visitor, unless a very intimate friend, would have the privilege of regarding her presence as undesirable.

D. R.—Do not marry without the consent of your parents until you are twenty-one years of age. If you postpone your wedding till that time, you will then know the strength of your mutual affection and its constancy. Your parents will by that time have probably withdrawn all objection, or you will have come over to their views.

HORACE F.—To ascertain your rights to the property in question it will be absolutely necessary to employ a lawyer. It would be impossible for us to spare the time to find the whereabouts of the heir, or the former owners of the estate, or to consult the various legal authorities necessary for a clear understanding of the subject.

M. H. S.—To make seltzer water, take of chloride of calcium and chloride of magnesium, each 4 grains. Dissolve these in a small quantity of water, and add to it a similar solution of 3 grains of bicarbonate of soda, 20 grains of common salt, and 1 grain of phosphate of soda. Mix, and add a solution of  $\frac{1}{2}$  grain of sulphate of iron. Put this mixture into a 30-ounce bottle, and fill up with aerated water. Another imitation of seltzer water is made by putting into a stone bottle filled with water 2 drachms of bicarbonate of soda and a like quantity of citric acid in crystals, corking the bottle immediately.

GEORGINA.—Knowing the young gentleman so well, it is for you to judge which will prove the most suitable for a husband. We would not care to assume the responsibility of advising you which to choose, although it would be best to leave the one who possesses neither good nature nor property severely alone. Looking at the case from a romantic point of view, the one who is penniless and homely, but endowed with an angelic temperament, might prove a desirable life-companion. Practically, however, this latter quality will not supply the necessities of life, unless its owner has plenty of grit and is willing to work hard for the maintenance of his beloved.

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London: Published for the Proprietor, at 334, Strand, by J. B. Speck; and Printed by WOODFALL and KIRKS, Milford Lane, Strand